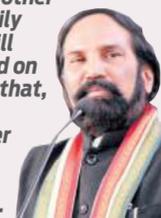


We have provided excellent governance in Telangana during the last 100 days. We are setting right the disorganised governing system. It is a blatant lie to say that we collected U-tax. I am now in another state with my family for darshan. We will come to Hyderabad on Wednesday. After that, I will give an appropriate answer to all the allegations of Maheshwar Reddy.

— N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Civil Supplies Minister, TG



Can court examine legality of arrest after cognisance of ED's complaint **taken?**

INDIA ON CUSP OF LONG-AWAITED ECONOMIC TAKE-OFF: RBI



Rakshana teaser: Paayal Rajput strikes **AS A COP**



DON'T MISS...

'Lakes polluted in State due to...

MA&UD Principal Secretary M Danakishore said that as a result of fast urbanisation, many lakes in the State, especially in urban areas have become severely contaminated or encroached upon. Therefore lake restoration is crucial to maintaining the water table's equilibrium in the State. A workshop on lake protection and rejuvenation in urban areas was held on Tuesday in Hyderabad, where he said that the government is giving top priority for protection and conservation of lakes, especially in urban areas. Lake Protection...

-PAGE: 3

'Silent demise' of rangelands...

Up to 50 per cent of the world's rangelands - vast open areas suitable for grazing livestock - are estimated to be degraded, posing a severe threat to food supply and survival of billions of people, the UN warned in a new report on Tuesday. Launched in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification's (UNCCD) 'Global Land Outlook Thematic Report' attributed the degradation of the immense natural pastures and other rangelands to overuse, misuse, and climate change. The degradation is...

-PAGE: 5

Market cap of BSE-listed firms hits...

The combined market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies hit the US\$ 5-trillion milestone for the first time on Tuesday. At the close of trade, the total valuation of the exchange-listed companies stood at an all-time high of Rs 4,14,62,306.56 crore (US\$ 4.97 trillion), the BSE data showed. The 30-share Sensex declined 52.63 points, or 0.07 per cent, to settle at 73,953.31. However, during the day, it hit a high of 74,189.19, rallying 183.25 points, or 0.24 per cent. "The market capitalisation..."

-PAGE: 8

RR desperate to arrest slide...

Sanju Samson's Rajasthan Royals will face a stern test of character as they look to arrest a shocking slide in a do-or-die IPL Eliminator against an in-form Royal Challengers Bengaluru, here on Wednesday. The Royals, at one stage, had looked set for a top-place finish in the league stage before a string of four defeats and a washout in the last game against KKR resulted in Sanju Samson's side finishing third behind Sunrisers Hyderabad. On the other hand, RCB have sensationally fought...

-SPORTS

Oppn spreading panic among farmers: Bhatti

Says Rs 500 bonus being paid for fine variety



DCM Bhatti Vikramarka addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Tuesday

- Govt will follow Rajiv Gandhi's path: Bhatti
- Cong admin way ahead of BRS Govt in opening paddy purchase centres
- Soaked paddy also to be procured

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The opposition is creating panic among farmers as it is unhappy with the Cong government depositing money into the bank accounts of farmers within three days of procuring paddy, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu said. Addressing the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Tuesday, he advised the opposition not to use politics to create problems for farmers in their desperation. He said that the leaders of the BJP and BRS are again back to their

game of spreading lies about paddy procurement in the state and also saying that harvested paddy is lying soaked in water. Recalling the plight of farmers and the mounds of soaked, germinating paddy on roadsides during his padyatra last year as the BRS admin failed to purchase paddy, the Deputy CM said that thousands of farmers had poured out their woes to him then. Bhatti said that even germinated paddy would be purchased by the government at the Minimum Support Price. "There is no need for farmers to get disturbed. This is a praja government and it is our responsibility to see people do not suffer," he said. Referring to the bonus issue, he said the government has already started paying a bonus of Rs 500 for fine variety paddy.

2

'Uttam collected Rs 500 cr through U-tax'

Maheshwar alleges that Rs 100 crore sent to Delhi



BJLP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy addressing the media at State BJP office on Tuesday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJLP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy said that 'U-tax' is being collected in the state and that Rs 500 crore has already been collected. He said that Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy had sent Rs 100 crore to New Delhi from the Rs 500 crore. He said that Uttam sent the money to AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal to signal that he is in the Chief Minister race and due to the fear of being left behind in the CM race.

"Is it not true that Uttam did this out of fear as his colleagues are sending money to New Delhi? Will Uttam take responsibility or should officials own up? I think Civil Supplies Commissioner Chouhan may not know about agriculture," he said. Addressing the media at the State BJP office on Tuesday, Maheshwar asked the Civil Supplies Department to reveal whether they have info about the rice millers who are delaying giving money to farmers.

2

New Industrial Policy soon:CM

Asserts Telangana will compete globally in growth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy asked officials to formulate appropriate policies so that Telangana can compete with other countries in industrial development. The Chief Minister held a review with officials of the Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation and gave suggestions for a new industrial policy for facilitating industrial growth in the state. The officials told the CM about the decisions taken during the previous review meetings. The CM asked officials to formulate a new policy to help power loom and handloom workers and promote the textile industry. Officials told the CM that six new policies will be formulated

for industrial development. They are the MSME Policy, Export Policy, New Life Sciences Policy, Revised EV Policy, Medical Tourism Policy and the Green Energy Policy. The Chief Minister directed the officials to finalise industrial policies before the election code is lifted. The CM also asked officials to study the industrial policies adopted by other countries.



CM Revanth Reddy participating in the review of industrial growth in Telangana on Tuesday

No decision yet on new liquor policy: Jupally

Says all liquor brands available in state depots

Excise & Prohibition Minister Jupally Krishna Rao said that all liquor brands are in stock in the state's 19 liquor depots. He said the government had not yet decided on a new liquor

policy. Government policies are decided only by the Cabinet, Jupally said. He also said that no one had applied for new brands. Addressing the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Tuesday, Jupally

said that a section of the media is slinging mud on the Congress government wilfully.

2

Bangladesh MP goes missing in Kolkata



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A court here is likely to pronounce on May 31 its order on whether to take cognisance of a supplementary charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against Bharat Kashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha in an excise policy-linked money laundering case. Special Judge for ED and CBI matters Kaveri Baweja reserved the order after taking note of the anti-money laundering agency's claim that it has sufficient evidence to prosecute her. The ED also asserted it has adequate evidence against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to prosecute him in the case. The court fixed May 28 for considering the supplementary charge sheet filed against Kejriwal and his Aam Aadmi Party.

Delhi court reserves order on cognisance of charge-sheet against BRS MLC Kavitha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A court here is likely to pronounce on May 31 its order on whether to take cognisance of a supplementary charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) against Bharat Kashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha in an excise policy-linked money laundering case. Special Judge for ED and CBI matters Kaveri Baweja reserved the order after taking note of the anti-money laundering agency's claim that it has sufficient evidence to prosecute her. The ED also asserted it has adequate evidence against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to prosecute him in the case. The court fixed May 28 for considering the supplementary charge sheet filed against Kejriwal and his Aam Aadmi Party.



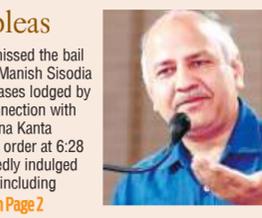
Kejriwal is out on interim bail till June 1 following an order of the Supreme Court which permitted him to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections. It has directed him to surrender on June 2 and go back to jail.

2

No relief for Manish Sisodia

HC dismisses bail pleas

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday dismissed the bail pleas of former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia in money laundering and corruption cases lodged by the ED and the CBI respectively in connection with the alleged liquor scam. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, who started pronouncing the order at 6:28 pm for 22 minutes, said Sisodia allegedly indulged in the destruction of crucial evidence, including electronic evidence. Continued on Page 2



Govt must pay bonus for all paddy varieties: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA T. Harish Rao said the Congress government should pay bonuses for all varieties of paddy produced by farmers. He also demanded that the government should pay bonuses for other crops also produced by farmers as it had assured and that the government must deposit Rythu Bandhu money in the accounts of farmers in June itself. Addressing the media at the Telangana Bhavan on Tuesday, Harish said that it is shocking that

the Congress government said that it will pay bonus only for fine paddy variety. He said that the government needs Rs 6,000 crore to pay Rs 500 bonus for 1.20 crore tonnes of paddy. However, it needs only Rs 500 crore if it gives the bonus to only fine paddy variety. He said the BRS will not let go of the Congress government on the bonus issue and that the BRS will unite all farmers and launch a movement demanding that the government pay bonuses for all paddy varieties. Continued on Page 2



Govt appoints IAS officers as in-charge VCs in 9 varsities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government appointed IAS officers as in-charge VCs in nine universities in the State as the tenure of their

Vice-Chancellors ended on Tuesday. Dana Kishore has been appointed as the in-charge Vice Chancellor of Osmania University, Burra Venkatesham of JNTU,

Vakati Karuna of Kakatiya University, S.A.M. Rizvi of Amedbedkar Open University, Sandeep Kumar Sultania of Telangana University, Naveen Mittal of Mahatma Gandhi

University, Shailaja Ramaier of Potti Srimamulu Telugu University, Surendra Mohan of Satavahana University and Jayesh Ranjan of the Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and Finance University.

Mallanna will prove dangerous to Cong: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress candidate in the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduate MLC by-poll, Theenmar Mallanna, is facing 56 cases and has spent 74 days in jail, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said. He said the Congress has fielded a blackmailer as its candidate and that the selection of Theenmar Mallanna as the Congress's MLC candidate would prove dangerous to its leaders in future.



Addressing a gathering at the Nagarjuna Sagar on Tuesday, KTR said the Congress has been deceiving the unemployed by saying that it had filled 30,000 posts in government service without issuing a single notification. He appealed to the graduates to vote after reviewing both candidates. KTR said the Congress which gave an assurance that it would give Rs 500 as bonus for every quintal of all crops is now saying that it will give bonus only for the fine paddy variety.

2

'Jayajayahe Telangana' will be state anthem from June 2

Keeravani will score music for state anthem

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

'Jayajayahe Telangana' will be the official state anthem from June 2. It will be dedicated to the people of the state on June 2. After that, the song would be played during all government functions and whenever the state anthem is usually sung. The government is planning to release the state anthem by former AICC President Sonia Gandhi on June 2. The government is also planning to conduct state Formation Day celebrations officially at the Parade Grounds on a grand note if the Election Commission does not object. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had made some changes to the

The song's duration is one and a half minutes. The Revanth Reddy government made Oscar-winning music director MM Keeravani to score music for 'Jayajayahe Telangana.'

'Jayajayahe Telangana' song written by Ande Sri. It is learnt that the song was written before the formation of the state hoping for a Telangana state. As the Telangana state is a reality changes have been made in the song, it is learnt. The song's duration is one and a half minutes. The Revanth Reddy government made Oscar-winning music director MM Keeravani to

score music for 'Jayajayahe Telangana.' June 2 will mark the 10th anniversary of the formation of Telangana. The state government roped in MM Keeravani and Ande Sri to come up with a revamped version of the iconic 'Jayajayahe Telangana' to celebrate the special occasion. Keeravani has finished composing the song and he met the CM on



Tuesday to submit the finished version. It may be recalled that the Cabinet decided to invite Sonia Gandhi as the chief guest to the Telangana Formation Day celebrations being held on June 2 and make her release the 'Jayajayahe Telangana' song. The 90-second song will narrate the sacrifices of TG martyrs to attain statehood, Telangana culture and

other aspects. The song will be dedicated to the people of Telangana. Writer Ande Sri and Keeravani met the Chief Minister on Tuesday and heard the song. It is learnt the Chief Minister praised their efforts saying that the song is good. It may be recalled that the state Cabinet decided at its February 5 meeting to adopt 'Jayajayahe Telangana' as the state anthem.

Testing time ahead for KTR

SNCN ACHARYULU
HYDERABAD

One more testing time is ahead for BRS Working President KT Rama Rao aka KTR.

After the Lok Sabha elections, KTR has taken responsibility for leading the party in the MLC graduates' constituency by-elections. The by-election was necessitated after BRS MLA Palla Rajeswar Reddy who was an MLC resigned.

The by-poll will be held on May 27 for the Warangal, Khammam and Nalgonda graduates MLC constituency.

By taking responsibility for this by-election, KTR wants to prove that he is as good a trou-

bleshooter as T. Harish Rao. It is not an easy task for KTR because the Congress is very strong in the erstwhile Khammam and Nalgonda districts. In Warangal district also the Congress has now gained strength with some top BRS leaders joining it.

Usually the BRS leadership hands over tough tasks to Harish. Many times Harish has proved that he is indeed a good troubleshooter. BRS President K. Chandrasekhar Rao has told this openly many times.

When the BRS is facing a critical situation KTR taking responsibility for the by-election replacing trouble shooter Harish surprised party circles.



Whether KTR can prove himself to be a troubleshooter depends on the result of the by-election.

In addition to being in a strong position in these three districts the Congress is in power too. The followers of KTR say that taking up tough

challenges is the quality of a leader.

Along with the Lok Sabha elections, the BRS faces a tough battle in two by-elections. The by-election in the Secunderabad Cantonment Assembly constituency was held along with the Lok Sabha elections.

The by-election in the MLC graduates' constituency will be held on May 27 and the result will be declared on June 5, a day after the announcement of the results of the Lok Sabha elections and the by-election in the Secunderabad Cantonment Assembly constituency. The BRS is facing a litmus test in these three elections.

CM, family in Tirumala



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and his family reached Tirumala on Tuesday night to clear his grandson's 'mokku.' The CM's family will get his grandson tonsured.

The Chief Minister flew to Renigunta Airport first from Begumpet airport on a special flight. Later, the CM went to Tirumala by road.

TTD EO Dharma Reddy gave a grand welcome to the CM at the Rachana Guest House in Tirumala. The CM will have darshan of Srivaru on Wednesday morning and return to Hyderabad.

INDIA bloc communal, casteist and dynastic: Modi

PNS ■ MAHARAJGANJ

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday dubbed the INDIA bloc as a "congregation of scammers" that was communal, casteist and dynastic to a "severe" degree, "cent per cent".

Modi launched the blistering attack at rallies in Mahrajganj and Purvi Champaran Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar, where he also predicted a big blow for the opposition alliance that stood for corruption, appeasement politics and "perverted anti-Sanatan mindset", on June 4 when Lok Sabha poll results will be out.

The PM, who is seeking a third consecutive term in office, also underscored that he shall be bequeathing no "viraasat (inheritance)" since he considered the people of the



country as his only "waaaris (successors)".

He also charged the RJD-Congress combine, which formerly ruled Bihar, with having brought disrepute to "the land which gave birth to first president Rajendra Prasad".

He pointed out that the state, in the 1990s, had become known for "irangdaari tax (extortion)" and the NDA, which has been in power for nearly two decades, was trying to "bring to a halt the trend of

large-scale migration to other parts of the country for want of industries and job opportunities in Bihar".

He lambasted the Nehru-Gandhi family, which he referred to as "Congress royal family", for "keeping mum" over controversial remarks made by its leaders and allies against people of Bihar in states such as Punjab, Telangana and Tamil Nadu.

"Your vote is not just for electing your local MP but also to make your PM strong," said Modi, who also claimed that migrants from Bihar were treated well in Gujarat when he was the CM of that state.

The PM also launched indirect attacks on leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav, who he said were "born with silver spoons".

Kerala HC quashes Guv Khan's nominations to university senate

PNS ■ KOCHI

In a blow to Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, the High Court here on Tuesday quashed the nominations made by him as Chancellor of Universities to the senate of the University of Kerala and directed him to select fresh nominees within a period of six weeks.

The court, however, did not interfere with the nominations of the state government to the senate of the same university.

While quashing the nominations made by Khan, the court observed that "there is no unbridled power vested with the Chancellor while making the nominations in terms of the statutory provisions". Justice Mohammed Nias C P said that if a nomination made is contrary to the statutory requirement or if irrelevant factors were considered in making the decision, "the nominations will have to be interfered with by the constitutional courts". The court said that any arbitrary use of power violates not only the rule of equality enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution of India but also the rule of discrimination inbuilt in Article 16.

"An unbridled, unfettered and unbridled power is foreign to the exercise of any power, constitutional or statutory.

PM Modi was preparing 'communal pitch' but we refused to play on it: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had been indulging in polarisation throughout the election and preparing a "communal pitch", but it refused to play on that and pursued its 'paach nyay' agenda.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh's attack came over Modi's remarks in an interview with PTI in which he had said that he has never uttered a word against minorities, and the BJP has "not just today but never" acted against them.

Ramesh claimed that Prime Minister Modi's entire campaign from April 19 has been based on "communalisation"



with the Hindu-Muslim rhetoric throughout and "no talk of Viksit Bharat, Modi ki guarantee, or issues of the farmers, youth, women, workers, SCs, STs and OBCs".

Asked about the remarks, Ramesh said, "What nonsense is he talking about. This prime minister is fast losing his memory. He has never had any adherence to truth. He is 'joothjeevi', but now what he

says today, he forgets tomorrow and says he never said it."

"Of course he has been attacking the Congress party and has been talking of Hindu-Muslim," he said.

Ramesh said the PM had raised the issue of 'Muslim League' imprint on the Congress manifesto, the mangalsutra remarks and the allegation that the Congress will give reservations on the basis of religion, which were all "bogus statements".

"This is the prime minister who, when asked some years ago whether he had any remorse at the killings during the Gujarat riots, said even when a small puppy comes under a car, one feels bad. This is the language that he has used," Ramesh said.

Kishan takes up Kyrgyzstan crisis with Jaishankar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Tourism Minister G. Kishan Reddy who is also the Telangana BJP President addressed a letter to External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar on Tuesday regarding the crisis in Kyrgyzstan after receiving representations from the panic-stricken parents of Telugu students who are pursuing undergraduate programmes in medicine there.

Kishan posted his letter and said, "I have written and spoken to EAM @DrSJaishankar on the crisis in Kyrgyzstan after receiving

representations from the panic-stricken parents of Telugu students who are pursuing undergraduate programmes in Medicine. I have received representations from panic-stricken parents expressing concern over the safety of their children.

The Telugu media also picked up the item which further increased the anxiety amongst the families. Reportedly, most students are staying in hostels or in hired rooms without lights and access to necessities. If Indian students are found outside, they are being attacked by local students. The Indian Embassy is aware of the matter and is trying to help.

A majority of Indian students want to return to India, at least till the tension subsides as it is difficult for them to continue their studies there at present.

There is a great deal of insecurity among the students' parents which needs to be addressed.

I request you to consider organising special flights to bring back the Indian students till the situation is under control.

Videos and photographs are enclosed with this letter showing the intensity of the problem. Looking forward to your action."

CANNES ENTRIES 'All We Imagine as Light' and 'Santosh' find North American buyers

PNS ■ LOS ANGELES

"All We Imagine as Light", Payal Kapadia's competition entry for the 2024 Cannes Film Festival, has found a distributor for its release in North America.

According to American news outlet Variety, two companies -- Sideshow and Janus Films -- have jointly acquired the North American (US and Canada) rights to the movie, which is the first Indian film in 30 years and first ever by an Indian female director to be

screened in the main competition of the prestigious film gala.

Sideshow and Janus Films are planning a theatrical release, the report by Variety added.

Janus, which was set up in 1956, handles rights in all media to an extensive library that includes the work of Michelangelo Antonioni, Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, Abbas Kiarostami, Akira Kurosawa, Andrei Tarkovsky, Francois Truffaut, Agnes Varda.

'Congregation of the corrupt': BJP chief Nadda attacks INDIA bloc

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

BJP chief J P Nadda on Tuesday lashed out at the opposition INDIA bloc, dubbing it a "congregation of the corrupt".

At a road show in Haryana's Jind to seek votes for the BJP's Sonipat candidate, Nadda also accused the opposition parties of promoting dynastic politics.

"Is the Congress a party of scams or not? Is Lalu's party a party which indulged in scam or not?...", he asked the gathering.

He alleged that a number of scams took place during the previous Congress-led UPA regime.

Nadda also held a road show in Rohtak and asked the people to vote for the BJP. He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister



Nadda said various welfare policies of the Centre have brought positive changes in the lives of the people.

Narendra Modi, the country has become strong, self-reliant and is moving on the path of progress.

He said various welfare policies of the Centre have brought positive changes in the lives of the people.

The BJP chief also said Haryana is today on the path of rapid development under the "double-engine" government and exuded confidence that like 2019

Lok Sabha polls, this time too the BJP will make a clean sweep winning all 10 seats in the state.

BJP's Sonipat candidate Mohan Lal Badoli accompanied Nadda in Jind while riding an open vehicle. In Rohtak, the BJP chief was accompanied by party candidate from the constituency and sitting MP Arvind Sharma and senior leader O P Dhankar.

No relief for ...

Continued from page 1

The high court said he was a very powerful and influential person within the power corridors of the Delhi government. It said the material collected during the investigation showed that Sisodia prima facie subverted the process of making the excise policy by fabricating public feedback to suit his predetermined goal. The high court had on May 14 reserved its order on the pleas after hear-

ing arguments on behalf of the AAP leader, CBI and ED.

Sisodia has challenged a trial court's April 30 order by which his bail pleas were rejected.

The trial court had dismissed Sisodia's bail pleas in the corruption and money laundering cases lodged by the CBI and ED respectively in connection with alleged irregularities in the formulation and execution of the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy for 2021-22.

Women got their due under Modi govt : Yogi

PNS ■ VARANASI

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi prioritized women's welfare in his government's agenda in the past 10 years and claimed that before 2014, they did not get the respect they deserved.

At the Nari Shakti Samvaad programme in Varanasi, he mentioned various initiatives of the Central government for empowering women and said that women across the country have expressed their gratitude and warmly welcomed these initiatives.

"Before 2014, daughters and sisters in the country were unsafe and did not get the respect they deserved.

Mallanna will prove dangerous to...

Continued from page 1

He said that Congress rule is not people's rule but anti-farmer rule.

He said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy handed over irrigation projects on the Krishna River to the KRMB within a month of taking over. He asked Congress candidate Theenmar Mallanna to explain why he didn't oppose this.

KTR said the Congress gov-

ernment had failed to implement the promise to pay Rs 2,500 per month to women although both Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi had assured this during the Assembly election campaign in Telangana.

He said the Chief Minister and the Congress government had been speaking lies and asked the graduates to teach a lesson to the Revanth government by voting for the BRS candidate.

Govt must pay...

Continued from page 1

Harish said there are no arrangements to unload paddy from trucks at procurement centres.

Truck drivers are forced to wait for days at procurement centres and so truckers are not coming forward to transport paddy, he added.

Harish asked the government to procure paddy before it sprouts at all procurement centres. He said the state government is not in a position to provide seeds of the Jeeluga and Janumu crops to farmers.

No decision yet...

Continued from page 1

"Tell me what is your loss (a particular newspaper) if alcohol sale decreases. In the past, there were transfers and promotions only through recommendations in the Excise department. But there is no place for recommendations in our government. We are clearing pending bills as the BRS government failed to clear them. There is no place for corruption in the department when Jupally heads it," he said.

He said that a newspaper, which is the mouthpiece of the

BRS, published an article tarnishing the image of the Congress government. He said the BRS's survival is in danger and so it has been using its mouthpiece to publish such news.

He said that the beer shortage occurred due to pending bills and that transfers were ordered as some people have been working for years at one place in the Excise and Prohibition Department. He asked whether the opposition wanted to increase the consumption of liquor. Will the BRS suffer any loss if liquor sales go down, he asked.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Chaturdashi: May 21 05:39 PM to May 22 06:48 PM
Purnima: May 22 06:48 PM to May 23 07:22 PM
Nakshatram: May 21 05:46 AM to May 22 07:46 AM
Swati: May 22 07:46 AM to May 23 09:14 AM
Vishaka: 12:12 PM to 1:49 PM
Rahukalam: 7:22 AM to 8:59 AM
Yamagandam: 01:43 PM to 03:25 PM
Varjyam: 10:36 AM to 12:12 PM
Gulika: 11:54 PM to 01:36 AM
Amritkalam: 11:54 PM to 01:36 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 37°C
Humidity: 53%
Sunrise: 5:42 AM
Sunset: 6:44 PM
Updated: May 21, 2024 5:00 PM

Delhi court reserves order on...

Continued from page 1

The excise case pertains to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now-scrapped excise policy for 2021-22.

Lt Governor VK Saxena recommended a CBI probe into the alleged irregularities. Subsequently, the ED filed a money laundering case on August 22, 2022, taking cognisance of the CBI FIR over alleged corruption that was lodged on August 17, 2022.

Oppn spreading...

Continued from page 1

In fact, it was KCR who had said that cultivating paddy was suicidal and warned farmers not to cultivate paddy.

Paying tributes to late PM Rajiv Gandhi on his death anniversary, Bhatti said Rajiv Gandhi who tried to make India compete with other countries in the international arena, sadly lost his life to evil forces.

With great foresight Rajiv

Gandhi encouraged the technology sector and motivated youth to take part in politics on a large scale, he said.

It is thanks to the path laid by Rajiv Gandhi that today information is available in minutes about what kind of crops were being cultivated where and how much paddy had been procured, Bhatti added.

The Congress admin would take forward the policies of Rajiv Gandhi, he said.

'Uttam collected Rs 500 crore...

Continued from page 1

Does the Civil Supplies Department have info about defaulters or not, he asked.

Maheshwar said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy should convene an all-party meeting on this issue and added that the BJP is ready to prove his allegations.

He said that it is a scam which sucks the blood of the poor. "Why does the government have to pay interest when the rice stock is with millers? Is it not

true that the government is paying interest," Maheshwar asked. He asked the Civil Supplies department to reveal after how many days the rice should be given to the government after custom milling.

"Do you have any data on how much rice was returned? What action was taken against millers if there was a delay in giving the rice? Why is paddy being given to millers who were defaulters? What is the objective behind this? On what basis is

paddy being given to millers? How is paddy being given to millers beyond their capacity? Are you selling the given paddy in the outside market? Are you ready to debate this? I am ready for anything if it is proved that I am wrong," Maheshwar said.

He said that Uttam should answer why Rs 25,000 crore was deposited with rice millers. "Why is the government paying interest on that money? I have information that fines were imposed on millers who did not

return the rice and that no receipts were issued for the collected fines. What is the share of officials in the money collected and what is the share of the minister? All ministers are collecting tolls in their departments and sucking the blood of the poor. Has any action been taken against them under the Revenue Act? The millers recycle the rice and sell it in the open market. If the minister responds to this, I will once again come before the media with evidence.

'Lakes polluted in State due to unplanned urbanisation'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

MA&UD Principal Secretary M Danakishore said that as a result of fast urbanisation, many lakes in the State, especially in urban areas have become severely contaminated or encroached upon. Therefore lake restoration is crucial to maintaining the water table's equilibrium in the State.

A workshop on lake protection and rejuvenation in urban areas was held on Tuesday in Hyderabad, where he said that the government is giving top priority for protection and conservation of lakes, especially in urban areas. Lake Protection Committees were constituted in order to cater to the protection of lakes in the Hyderabad Metropolitan Region with an aim to protect and improve lakes and their catchments.

He noted that there are more than 4,234 lakes in urban areas throughout the State. Healthy lakes not only provide us with a number of environmental benefits, they also influence our quality of life and



strengthen our economy.

He said that various GOs reflect the State's commitment towards protecting and rejuvenating its lakes and water bodies. By implementing these directives, the State aims to ensure sustainable water management, enhance biodiversity and improve the quality of life for its residents. The government has implemented creative and sustainable solutions through a variety of schemes and programmes, such as improving wastewater treatment facilities, lowering nutrient loads through buffer zones

and riparian planting, involving the community in the monitoring, using citizen science initiatives to raise awareness for the need to protect and conserve these water bodies locally.

GHMC Commissioner Ronald Ross said that a comprehensive approach is needed to address the issue of lake protection and rejuvenation with the active participation of the local community.

HMWSSB MD Sudharshan Reddy pointed out that while lakes are the lifeline in rural areas, they have become a

source of neglect in urban areas due to lack of sense of belonging among the citizens.

Healthy lakes not only provide us with a number of environmental benefits, they also influence our quality of life and strengthen our economy

Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration (CDMA) Divya lamented that urbanisation, pollution and neglect has severely impacted the health of many lakes, especially in rapidly growing urban areas. She felt that by combining scientific knowledge, innovative technology and community engagement, a model of sustainable urban development that balances growth with environmental stewardship can be created.

Raids on properties of Hyd ACP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) from Telangana conducted searches at the residences belonging to Hyderabad Central Crime Station (CCS) Assistant Commissioner of Police TS Uma Maheshwar Rao on Tuesday.

Sources said that Uma Maheshwar Rao has 17 properties. Among them five plots are in Ghatkesar and a villa in Shamirpet. Police have seized nearly Rs 38 lakh in cash and 60 tolas of gold during the raids. As per the market value, the officials have seized more than Rs 3 crore worth of assets.

The officials have reportedly conducted searches in more than six areas in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. He has allegedly received bribes from Sahithi directors to divert the case. Many complaints were reportedly received that he was supporting the accused in that case. The officials are reportedly verifying the cases, which Umamaheshwar Rao handled.

During the raid, the officials have reportedly found the name of Sandeep.

Min directs officials to develop and beautify temples in TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Konda Surekha, Minister of Forests, Environment and Endowments, has directed the officials to develop the temples in Telangana so as to enhance the spiritual beauty and provide mental comfort to the devotees, during a long review meeting conducted at the office of the Revenue Department in Boggikunta, Hyderabad on Tuesday.

The officials of the Endowments department were advised to take up the management of such temples with an inner sanctification. She directed the authorities to take measures to seize the encroached temple lands and also directed them to take strict measures to resolve the temple land disputes and appoint competent legal experts for speedy resolution.

She said that temples are not just physical structures, they are wealth that impart values, beliefs and cultural traditions to the future generations. The officials of the

While the officials explained that geo-tagging has already been done for 15,000 acres of land in order to prevent



encroachment of temple lands, the Minister advised the officials to complete the geo-tagging work of all types of land belonging to the department as soon as possible. She enquired about the leased temple lands, the details of the leased shops in the temple lands and the income generated by them. The officials were advised to collect the dues as soon as possible.

In addition to taking steps to register the details of the lands of the Endowments department in Dharani portal, the officials were advised to take steps to issue passbooks in the name of the respective temples. It was suggested that plans should be made in this direc-

tion to protect the temple lands by taking up function halls and other utility structures in the temple lands and generate income for the department.

Keeping in view the Bonalu festival to be held across Telangana in the month of Ashada, Minister Surekha directed the authorities to take up the construction of infrastructure in time in the areas where the Bonalu festivals take place.

The Minister advised the officials to look into the matter of taking up programmes to increase the spiritual beauty of temples like Jalharati and Sankhanadam in the river banks.

Advisory issued ahead of rainy season in State

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Director of Public Health and Family Welfare B Ravinder Nayak has issued an advisory stressing on health precautions during the rainy season. The public has been urged to be cautious against diseases including malaria, dengue and chikungunya



Nayak called for observance of every Friday as 'Dry day' to get rid of stagnant water near the house; discarded flower pots, cans, tyres, buckets, coolers, ditches and drains, which will help eradicate mosquito breeding possibilities need to be removed. Lawns need to be trimmed as short as possible.

To prevent water-borne diseases, including acute gastroenteritis, jaundice and typhoid, the advisory calls for drinking and carrying filtered/boiled water from home, bottled water when outside, washing hands frequently, specially before and after meals and also after visiting

the washroom. "Use and carry hand sanitizers with you, avoid eating outside, especially raw, pre-cut and uncovered food sold in the open like chat, salads, fruits and juices, and eat freshly made home cooked food and discard leftovers as far as possible," the advisory said.

To guard against air-borne infections such as viral fever, conjunctivitis and influenza, the advisory says, "Avoid shaking hands, sharing food, water and clothes, with someone who is sick, or when sick yourself, wash hands frequently, as well as use hand

sanitizers often, to avoid being infected." Minimise contamination of hands, avoid touching door handles, table tops, lift buttons, stair banisters, and railings in public places, cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough, to avoid infecting people around you.

The DPH listed the following precautions, secure doors and windows with mosquito nets / screens; Any holes in the net should be promptly closed; Keep windows and doors shut during early morning and evening; Cover beds and cribs with mosquito nets, preferably insecticide-treated; Net should have 156 holes in a square inch and tucked around the bed; Children should wear light-colored clothes which will cover their arms as well as legs; Apply mosquito repellent like creams or lotions before going outdoors; Maintain drains to prevent water stagnation; Cover septic tanks with a mesh to prevent mosquito breeding.

Quack's clinic raided; expired medicine seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Drug Control Administration (DCA) on May 20 raided a clinic operated by a quack in Nalgonda and seized a stock of expired medicines.

The accused was identified as Bandi Saidi Reddy, claimed to be a rural medical practitioner and practised without any qualification.

During the raid, the DCA officials seized 42 varieties of medicines, including physician's samples and expired drugs. DCA officials seized the stock worth a total of Rs 70,900.

Several higher generation 'antibiotics' were detected at the clinic.

"Indiscriminate sale of antibiotics by unqualified persons may have disastrous consequences on the health of rural public, including emergence of 'antimicrobial resistance'," said the DCA officials.

GHMC to launch shallow aquifer project in 5 parks

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The GHMC has taken up 'Shallow aquifer recharge project' on a pilot basis as part of AMRUT scheme under Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in five municipal parks. The parks are KLN Yadav Park in Khairatabad Zone, Techno Park in Serilingampally Zone, Indira Park in Secunderabad Zone, Kakatiya Nagar Colony Park and E-Sector Park in LB Nagar Zone.

The concept of the project is to drill shallow water injection borewells to a depth of 100 to 120 feet and pump out the water in the shallow aquifers so that the layers below will get recharged whenever there is rainfall, collecting water from the surrounding watershed, channeling the water through recharge pits.

This will recharge the underground layers, increasing

TO INCREASE GROUND WATER LEVEL



the water table. The project is being implemented with the help of agency 'The Rainwater Project.'

On Tuesday, the officials of the GHMC have conducted an awareness programme on the project along with the representative of National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA), and the 'Rainwater Project' team at the Kakatiya Nagar Colony Park.

The park has a watershed

area of 685738 Sqm, capacity of watershed 44.6 crore litres, with annual rainfall potential of 53 lakh litres.

Additional Commissioner Dr Sunanda Rani, head of The Rainwater Project Kalpana, LB Nagar Zone Deputy Director M Chandra Sekhara Rao, NIUA official Anurudh, Circle manager A Narasimha Rao and other officials of the GHMC attended the event.

EdCET-2024 on May 23

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Council of Higher Education announced on Tuesday that Telangana State Education Common Entrance Test (TS Ed.CET) will be scheduled on May 23, 2024. About 33,879 candidates registered for the test.

The test would be conducted in two sessions in 79 test centres across the State. Session-I will be from 10 am to 12 noon while Session-II will be from 2 pm to 4 pm. About 16,929 candidates will attempt the test in Session-I while 16,950 candidates take their test in Session-II. There are two test centres in Andhra Pradesh also at Kurnool and Vijayawada.

The officials stated that all the candidates who have registered for TSEdCET-2024 and not downloaded their hall tickets so far can download them from the website <https://edcet.tsche.ac.in>.

The candidates are requested to locate and reach the test centre 90 minutes before the commencement of the test i.e., Session-I before 8.30 am, Session-II before 12.30 pm.



CISCE focus on NEP for future of education

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The CISCE hosted a meeting at Centre of Excellence in Habsiguda on Tuesday, May 21, for the Principals of ICSE schools from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Dr Joseph Emmanuel, Chief Executive and Secretary of CISCE, led the discussions, emphasising the pivotal role of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in shaping the future of education. Dr Emmanuel underscored the need for integrating NEP-2020 guidelines to foster holistic development and innovative

teaching methodologies. The event commenced with a warm welcome by U A Sundari, Regional Secretary for the AP and Telangana region, who expressed enthusiasm for the collaborative efforts aimed at enhancing educational standards.

Dr Immanuel, the Chairman of CISCE and Dr Sangeetha Bhatia, the Deputy Secretary of CISCE were present on the occasion. The gathering of Principals exchanged insights on implementing NEP-2020 effectively and ensuring that the region's educational institutions remain at the forefront of academic excellence.

Employee loses Rs 94 lakh due to cyber crime

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 51-year-old private employee in Hyderabad lost Rs 94 lakh to a gold trading cyber crime between April and May.

On March 10, after seeing an advertisement on Facebook, he joined a WhatsApp group named "Suresh Kumar stock circle 720" to learn trading skills. Subsequently, a person introduced himself to him on WhatsApp as "Rama Singh" and claimed to be a 'group assistant' who assists with investments in the Indian stock market for significant long-term profits.

After 10 days of communication via WhatsApp, the group announced that the profit potential in the stock market was minimal and suggested switching to the gold trading market. They explained that

this platform allowed for international gold trading, where money transferred in Indian rupees would be converted to US dollars for trading in lots. On April 3, following Rama Singh's suggestion, he added Rs 3 lakh to an account number and began trading.

He saw profits in his trading account in the application. They encouraged to invest more for higher returns, then he transferred a total of Rs 22 lakh from his account to different individuals. On April 4, 2024, they asked him to leave the WhatsApp group and provided a Telegram ID for the "7011 newcomer group."

On April 12, 2024, he withdrew Rs 82,638, believing the platform was legitimate. Consequently, he transferred another Rs 5,00,000 to the specified account as instructed.

Additionally, they added an assistance fund of Rs 9,97,494 and 59,926 to his trading account, claiming it was to help him trade more gold lots for greater profit.

After several transactions, he tried to withdraw the money they cited general elections as a reason for the delay in transferring large amounts and requested an additional Rs 20 lakh as a guarantee fund, promising a refund after elections on June 4.

After paying the Rs 20 lakh, they assured him the process was underway, but the money was not transferred to his bank account. Realizing he was a victim of fraud, he lodged a complaint with the number 1930, as he had lost his entire lifetime investment, including loans taken from banks a total of Rs of 94,17,632.

CID recovers 30,000 stolen mobiles in 13 months

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana CID has revealed that it has recovered 30,049 lost or stolen mobile phones till May 2024. These phones have been traced through the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) portal which was launched in April last year.

The State is ranked second in the list of stolen phone recoveries; Karnataka topped the list with 35,945 phones recovered; Maharashtra (15,426) and Andhra Pradesh (7387) are ranked third and fourth respectively. In the first 100 days of the portal's launch in Telangana, 4,489 phones were recovered. State Additional DGP, CID is designated as Nodal Officer for CEIR portal who is also Super User.

DCA seizes stocks of overpriced medicine

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Drug Control Administration (DCA) on May 20 raided a medical shop in Uppal and seized an overpriced medicine.

The ointment, Mupirocin Ointment IP 2% which was sold under brand name "Teet-Bel Ointment" is under price control as per Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 and the price of product shall be in accordance with the 'Ceiling Price' fixed by National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA), Government of India. It was

being sold at Rs 135 for 5 grams, which is a violation of the aforementioned Act.

The Ceiling price fixed by the Central government including wholesale price Index for the product "Mupirocin Ointment 2% w/w" is Rs 20.29 per 1 gm i.e. Rs 101.45 per 5 gm (ceiling price).

Hence, maximum retail price including 12 % GST should not be more than Rs 113.62 per 5 gm tube. The firm charged an excess of Rs 21.37 per 5 gm tube, which is a violation of Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013.



Officials asked to clear proper TG-bPASS applications in time

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

After various complaints from the people, GHMC Commissioner Ronald Rose ordered the town planning officials to approve the eligible applications filed under the TG-bPASS as per the rules within the stipulated period. On Tuesday, the Commissioner held a review meeting with Town Planning officials in GHMC head office, where he reviewed the applications in GHMC circle-wise.

In the review meeting, Ronald Rose said, "The appli-



cations related to the building permissions under TG-bPASS should be resolved expeditiously without causing any inconvenience to the public. It is not correct to show some reason to reject the permission. It came to my notice that shortfalls rage is higher to

reject applications".

The Commissioner asked the officials to give the shortfalls and rejected data and advised them to change their workstyle. He ordered the officials to follow the instant registrations and approval should be done on field-level inspections, without any delay. Identify the dilapidated buildings, go to every street and see the cellars, he asked.

GHMC Chief City Planner Rajendra Prasad Naik, Chief Planners, Section Officers and Town Planning staff participated in this review meeting.

Amazon employee faces criminal complaint

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A criminal complaint has been lodged with the Economic Offences Wing Police Station in Hyderabad against an Amazon employee on the Indian payroll.

According to the ACP of the Economic Offences Wing Police Station, the complaint claims that around Rs 3,22,04,456 was misappropriated by transferring funds to 50 bank accounts owned by accomplices, deceiving 184 ex-employees and inactive

employees of their rightful payments.

An FIR, No. 04/2024, was registered on April 3 under offences including dishonest misappropriation of property, criminal breach of trust, under sections 403, 408, 420, 467, 468, 471, 477-A, 201, r/w 120b of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

According to the Economic Offences Wing Police, preliminary investigations were done and the accused was apprehended on Monday on the outskirts of Hyderabad by the Economic Offences Wing.

Cops should be aware of new criminal laws: CP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda Commissioner Tarun Joshi provided advanced computers, laptops and tablets to the Station House Officers and Blue Colts staff and Petromobiles staff at the Commissioner's office in Neredmet with the intention of providing more efficient and prompt services to the people by introducing modern technology as part of law and order maintenance measures.

About 170 tablets, 18 laptops

and 80 advanced desktop computers purchased at a cost of Rs 1.33 crore for this programme were provided to various stations on a special initiative.

CP Tarun Joshi congratulated the Rachakonda police personnel of all departments for their efficient work in conducting the Lok Sabha elections peacefully. He said that modern technology should be used effectively to curb crimes in today's digital world. The tablets, desktop computers and laptops with latest software are

being provided to ensure that there is no technical delay in the registration of complaints of victims and to be useful in the day-to-day duties of the police. Along with common crimes, there is a need for technological knowledge to prevent cyber crimes which are increasing day-by-day. Everyone should work with the aim of providing prompt services to the people and should consider their responsibility to maintain peace and security.

Others may emulate Jagan's 'investment' model if he wins!

The Government of Andhra Pradesh, under the leadership of YS Jaganmohan Reddy, has borrowed heavily or taken huge loans from the Union government, external agencies, and government corporations. The borrowings and loans obtained by the AP government total around Rs.11 lakh crore; or, in other words, each and every citizen in the state, including a newborn, has to share financial burden of the state to the tune of more than Rs. 2 lakh.

Curiously, almost the whole of the loans and borrowings have funded populist welfare schemes that bring joy to the beneficiaries but nothing tangible in return for the state exchequer. Nobody would accept the narrative popularized during the election campaign that distributing money directly to beneficiaries of welfare schemes reflected development achieved by a welfare-oriented government.

It is not without reason that the Chinese proverb 'Teach a poor man to catch fish, instead of giving him fish' has become popular across the world. Satiating hunger is different from providing a poor man regular and sustainable means of livelihood.

Welfare schemes, especially like the ones hugely popular in AP, will make the poor rely more and more on the government. If the marginal man is made to act independently for earning two square meals

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a day for his family, he could soon become a tool for further progress in society. For, the government can then focus on creation of assets that can benefit the entire community and put the state on the path of progress.

Instead, these days, governments tend to sell public assets to fund their populist schemes. Even land parcels, most precious public assets, are being auctioned to bridge the shortfall of funds for the implementation of welfare schemes.

Lakhs of beneficiaries are believed to have received money in the name of welfare schemes and each family has received Rs.1 lakh to Rs.3 lakh



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

under the chain of welfare schemes popularly known as Nava Ratnalu, brainchild of YSRCP chief and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. Jagan is therefore supremely confident that these

welfare schemes would translate into votes for his party. It is a fact that most of the beneficiaries have turned blind supporters of Jagan. In fact, some of these beneficiaries believe that AICC leader Sonia Gandhi had foisted criminal cases on Jagan for not toeing the Congress' line.

Jagan did not care about the future of the Polavaram project, which is vital for the development of the state. At the same time, those who had received welfare benefits under direct benefit transfer have not shown any improved standard of living. They have simply spent the entire money that they had received all these years with no change in their means of livelihood or earning capacity. Their contribution to the state, and thereby to the

nation, remains zero. No one knows whether the state economy benefitted in any manner from the Rs.2.80 lakh crore spent till date on welfare schemes in AP.

Development of villages is central to the growth of the country. The Union government has allocated lakhs of crores of rupees for the uplift of villages nationwide. Andhra Pradesh was allocated Rs.15,000 crore towards this end, thanks to the 73rd&74th Constitutional amendments. Strangely, the AP government entered the scene and got those funds transferred from the accounts of village panchayats to the state exchequer. The panchayats yielded meekly because 90% of the gram panchayats are under the con-

trol of YSRCP supporters.

Jagan got tremendous support from people in the 2019 elections. He created a record by securing 86% of seats (151 out of 175) in the AP Legislative Assembly. Bent upon retaining power at any cost, he found it easy to go ahead with welfare largesse to enlist the marginalized sections as his diehard supporters.

In this backdrop, other leaders who believe in throwing crumbs at marginalized sections, instead of working for real, tangible growth of the state or country, may emulate Jagan's investment model if he wins! Jagan could become the role model for leaders for whom only the next election counts. They are least bothered about the next or succeeding generations.

POLLS TO LOCAL BODIES

Cong leaders yearning to prove their mettle

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following a statement issued by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy that local bodies elections would be held after the conclusion of all phases of MP elections, the Congress rank and file are in a jubilant mood.

The government has plans to conduct the local body polls after the June 4 counting of the MP elections.

Revanth Reddy went on record several times stating that the local Congress leaders who worked hard to get the party nominee get good majority would be given priority in fielding them in local bodies polls.

Therefore, the local body leaders have been tightening their belts to test their luck in



The Congress leaders are also busy mobilising funds to meet the election expenses. There are over 12,769 panchayats in the State and over 88,000 wards in Telangana. There are over 5,857 MPTC and 539 ZPTC vacancies are there in the State

the local bodies elections.

In addition to the village panchayats, elections are going to be held for GHMC, MPTC, ZPTC, municipalities and municipal corporations.

The Congress leaders are also busy mobilising funds to meet the election expenses. There are over 12,769 panchayats in the State and over 88,000 wards in Telangana. There are

over 5,857 MPTC and 539 ZPTC vacancies are there in

the State.

There are over 140 municipalities and municipal corporations.

The quota decided by the BRS at the time of the last panchayat elections will be in vogue for two terms, according to the Panchayat Raj Act.

One term of the village panchayats has been over. The Congress in its election manifesto has declared that it would conduct caste-based census once it comes to power in Telangana. Upon coming to power, it took a decision at its Cabinet meeting to conduct the caste-based census and has allocated Rs 150 crore for the purpose.

The government has been making arrangements to conduct the census once the code

of conduct is over. The officials say that the reservations for local bodies elections will undergo change with the implementation of the caste-based census.

The Congress came to power in Telangana after 10 years of formation of the new State. During the past 10 years, the local Congress leaders are deprived of any position. At some places Congress leaders won in the local bodies elections during the past decade, but they had to cross over to the BRS due to pressure from the BRS leaders.

Now many erstwhile Congress leaders returned to their parent party. They are keen to prove their mettle in local body elections.

Procurement centres fail to reach target in State

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

The paddy procurement centres set up by the government have procured only 4.25 lakh tonnes of paddy against the targeted 6 lakh tonnes so far.

The farmers sold coarse variety of paddy to the government at the MSP and fine variety to private millers from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka at a price higher than that of the MSP.

The State government has encouraged the private rice millers procuring paddy at a higher price as it is beneficial to the farmers. It asked the officials to ensure that the farmers are not cheated by the private millers in the name of discounting of paddy. The area under paddy in Nizamabad district,

which is one of the top three paddy producing districts, has increased by 150 per cent. In Kharif season last year, the area under paddy was 4.20 lakh acres, while the area under the crop in rabi was 4.10 lakh acres.

The MSP for grade-A variety of paddy is put at Rs 2203 per quintal, while the MSP for the second variety is Rs 2,183 per quintal.

As the paddy crop failed in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka due to heavy rains and floods, the rice millers have been procuring paddy from here. The private rice millers procured fine variety of paddy in last kharif at Rs 2,800 a quintal. Encouraged by the good price being offered by private millers, the farmers raised fine variety of paddy in 85% of the total area

under paddy cultivation in Nizamabad district. The total paddy yield in Rabi was 14 lakh tonnes. The State government targeted to procure 6 lakh tons through 480 procurement centres. In April first week, 438 centres have been set up. Twenty days prior to that the private millers have procured 50% of the paddy produced. The private millers offered price of Rs 2,400 per quintal to the fine variety of paddy. As a result, the private millers procured 10 lakh tons of paddy. The farmers sold 4.25 lakh tonnes to government. The government purchased paddy worth Rs 937.46 crore. So far, the government deposited Rs 824.94 crore. The government seems to have plan to close the procurement centres in four or five days.

Rajiv Gandhi's contribution to Science and Tech remembered

PNS ■ RANGA REDDY

Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar, along with Congress party leaders, organised a programme in Shadnagar of Rangareddy district to commemorate the death anniversary of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. They recalled his contribution to Science and Technology.

The event, held on Tuesday, saw locals paying homage by garlanding Rajiv Gandhi's statue at Farooq Nagar and distributing fruits and bread to patients at the government hospital.

MLA Veerlapalli Shankar highlighted Rajiv Gandhi's pivotal role in advancing India's technological landscape. He praised Rajiv Gandhi as a visionary leader who, despite his young age, left an indelible mark on the nation through his service as prime minister. Shankar credited India's progress in Science and Technology to Rajiv Gandhi's leadership and decision-making.

Reflecting on Rajiv Gandhi's



Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar, along with party leaders pays floral tributes to the statue of former prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi

statesmanship, Shankar recalled the late former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's admiration for Rajiv Gandhi's values in politics and his role in providing medical treatment abroad during Vajpayee's tenure. He emphasised the need for every Congress worker to uphold Rajiv Gandhi's aspirations.

Shankar also expressed confidence in the leadership of Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, guided by the blessings of Sonia Gandhi and

Rahul Gandhi, in carrying forward Rajiv Gandhi's vision for the State. The event was attended by various Congress party members, including PCC members Mohammed Ali Khan Babar, MPP Khaja Ahmad Idris, ZPTC Venkatarami Reddy, town Congress president Chennaiah, Mandal president Srikanth Reddy, Minority leader Jamrud Khan and Youth Congress leader Purushottam Reddy and Councillor Krishnaveni.

BRS activists torch effigy of Revanth Reddy

PNS ■ SURYAPETA

BRS activists on Tuesday torched an effigy of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy in Nagaram of Suryapeta district and raised slogans against the CM and threatened to step up their agitation if the state government did not implement the assurance it made to the people.

The people are incensed over the Congress government taking a U-turn on payment of Rs 500 per quintal as bonus only to the farmers who produced fine variety of paddy.

The BRS alleges that the assurance of paying the bonus to all farmers is a bogus promise.

The Congress let down the farmers who produce fine variety of paddy. Moreover, the government promises to give the bonus from the kharif season, as declared by Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy.

Mango sales at brisk pace in Karimnagar

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Sale of mangoes is going on at a brisk pace in Karimnagar fruit market with farmers bringing their mangoes to the market with the availability of several amenities for them in the market.

The mangoes are being exported to other states directly from here bringing good recognition to the local mango varieties.

Mango gardens spread over 6,500 acres in Manakondur, Timmapur, Ramadugur,

Gangadhara, Ganneruvaram, Kottapalli, Choppadandi, Karimnagar rural, Chigurumamidi and other mandals of the district. The main mango varieties being produced in the district are Banginapalli, Alphanso, Daseri, Totapuri and Himayat enjoy good demand from customers.

In 2019, the mango sales have been put at 3,945 tonnes, in 2020, the sales dropped due to pandemic situation to 3,274 tonnes, in 2021, the sales was at its low at 1,091 tonnes, in 2022, the situation improved to

4,899 tonnes, in 2023, the mango sales crossed 8,817 tonnes. During the current season till May 17, 6169 tonnes of mangoes were sold.

In the beginning, a ton of mangoes fetched anything between Rs 65,000 and 70,000. However, currently a ton of mangoes fetch only Rs 30,000. With the help of the local commission agents, various traders vie with each to buy mangoes from here.

Mangoes are being exported to states of Jammu and Kashmir, MP, Delhi, UP,

Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat, earning a sizeable revenue to the market committee here.

According to Karimnagar market committee secretary Purushottam, all amenities are available at the fruit market in Karimnagar for the farmers. The market committee monitors the situation ruling out any inconvenience to the farmers and traders from other states. The quantity of mangoes being brought to the market is increasing with each passing year.

Villagers storm into village tank en masse with nets to catch fish

PNS ■ MAHABUBABAD

All residents of Nerada village in Kuravi mandal of Mahabubabad district, armed with fishing nets, stormed into the village tank, which is full with water due to recent heavy rains, competed with fishermen in catching the fish and fled the place taking with them maximum possible number of fish as the police remained mute spectators to the event.

With many villagers capturing fish in the village tank using the nets, the entire place

reminded one of pushkarams usually occurring to rivers once in 12 years.

As the fishermen ventured into the village tank to capture fish as water reached into the tanks following recent rains, thousands of villagers ventured into the tank armed with fishing nets.

Fishermen live off the fish they catch from water bodies in villages. Sometimes, others too catch fish using fishing rods. But, they are prohibited from using fishing nets. But, residents of Nerada village

stormed into the village tank armed with fishing nets. They did not mind the presence of the police there. The whole tank has been emptied of the fish. However hard the police tried to prevent the villagers from fishing in the tank, the villagers paid no heed to the words of the police and engrossed totally in catching the fish.

Some of the villagers recall that it is third such an incident to take place in the village tank - The PeddaCheruvu. Around the time of MrugasiraKarte,

the villagers would have the right to catch fish in the tank. That is why the villagers have been catching the fish. The villagers said that no clash took place between the villagers and the fishermen unlike the earlier. In the past, when the villagers storm into the tank en masse to catch fish there ensued a clash between fishermen and villagers. The police swung into action and tried to pacify both the groups, but the villagers did not mind the police but pushed them aside and caught fish in the tank.

Narsaiah Goud urges Govt to release fees reimbursement funds

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bhongir Lok Sabha constituency BJP candidate Dr Boora Narsaiah Goud demanded the State government to release pending fees reimbursement funds immediately.

While addressing the media at BJP State office on Tuesday, Narsaiah Goud said that the State government has to pay Rs 7,500 crore pending bills in regard to fees reimbursement scheme. He said that the students are facing a lot of problems with the stoppage of these funds. It is not correct for the present government to say that the college managements questioned the previous BRS government when they asked the present government about fees reimbursement funds issue.

Narsaiah Goud said that the Congress government released

Rs 4,000 crore to the contractors who completed the works of colleges and schools during the BRS regime. The present government is not showing interest in releasing the pending bills to the students. However, the same government showed interest in regard to contractors' bills, he pointed out.

Narsaiah Goud alleged that the government had not yet paid though it gave Rs 2,000 crore tokens. He said that Rs 1,400 crore Arogya Sri bills are pending across the State and the government is not paying them. With this, there was no possibility in the private hospitals to extend treatment if any poor goes to private hospitals with Arogya Sri card, Narsaiah Goud said, demanding the government to release those funds immediately.

Man shells out Rs 25 lakh for fancy registration number

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A car owner has paid Rs 25.5 lakh to get a fancy registration number of '9999' for his vehicle in a bidding held here, Telangana State Road Transport Authority officials said on Tuesday.

Hyderabad Joint Transport Commissioner C Ramesh said in the online auction for fancy registration numbers, '9999' was taken for the highest bid amount wherein the car owner paid Rs 25,50,002 for the number plate 'TG-09 9999' for his high-end vehicle, to the department.

As many as 11 people participated in the fancy number auction '9999' held on Monday and the number fetched Rs

25.5 lakh.

"So far this is the highest bid amount for a fancy number, which is a record in Telangana," the official said. Earlier in August last year, the '9999' number had fetched Rs 21.6 lakh.

The official further said anyone interested in the fancy number can reserve it by paying Rs 50,000 and participate in the bidding if there are more bidders.

The Khairatabad Road Transport Authority (RTA) office clocked a revenue of over Rs 43 lakh during the auction for other fancy numbers on Monday.

The Congress government in Telangana had in March this year changed the vehicle registration code to TG from TS.

Botsa confident of 175/175 seat tally

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana has announced that the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) expects a landslide victory in the upcoming elections, predicting they will win all 175 Assembly constituencies. He stated that YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will be sworn in as Chief Minister in Visakhapatnam on June 9.

Addressing the media in Vijayawada on Tuesday, Botsa criticised the Opposition Leader, Chandrababu Naidu, and suggested that a reward be offered for information on Naidu's whereabouts. He added that Naidu should seek court permission for any foreign travel.

Botsa accused pro-TDP media of publishing false reports against the Education Department. He emphasised that YSRCP's manifesto



includes comprehensive reforms in education and medicine, which will be implemented upon coming to power. He questioned why opposition parties criticise these policies if they are ineffective.

From 2018-19 to the present, Botsa claimed, TDP media falsely reported about 4 lakh student dropouts.

He stated that by the 2025-26 academic year, classes will com-

mence with 38,61,198 students. He praised the state's education system, highlighting international recognition and the high participation of Andhra Pradesh students in competitive exams.

Botsa detailed several educational reforms introduced by CM Jagan, including English medium instruction, TOEFL training, CBSE syllabus, Byju's curriculum, and the IB system starting next year. He also mentioned initiatives like providing nutritious food and financial support schemes such as 'Amma Vodi', 'Vidya Deevana', and 'Vidya Kanuka'.

The minister affirmed that the YSRCP treats its election manifesto as a holy book and believes the public will support its continued reforms. He reiterated that Jagan Mohan Reddy will be sworn in again as Chief Minister after the expected victory on June 4.

INDIA CORNER

Lt Guv, CM pull Tirukameeswarar temple chariot in Puducherry

Puducherry Lieutenant Governor C P Radhakrishnan, Chief Minister N Rangasamy and Home Minister A Namassivayam were among those who pulled the chariot of Tirukameeswarar temple in neighbouring Villianoor on Tuesday. Opposition DMK leader R Siva and delegates from different outfits also formed part of the large number of people who pulled the chariot. It has been the practice since the French regime in Puducherry that the head of the State should pull the chariots of the temples on the occasion of annual car festivals. Radhakrishnan and others later offered prayers at the sanctum sanctorum. Several organisations arranged free distribution of food to the people thronging the temple. The temple in Villianoor was constructed by a Chola King in 12th century. The car festival attracts large numbers of people from within Puducherry and neighbouring districts of Tamil Nadu.



Two polling booths in Jhansi record 100 per cent turnout

Two polling booths in the Jhansi Lok Sabha constituency, where elections were held in the fifth phase on May 20, have recorded 100 per cent voter turnout, officials said on Tuesday. According to an official statement issued by District Election Officer (DEO) and District Magistrate Akshay Tripathi, all 375 voters -- 198 men and 177 women -- at booth number 277 in Saldia of Mehrauni Assembly cast their votes. Similarly, at booth number 355 in Bamhora Nagal village, all 441 registered voters -- 235 men and 206 women -- participated, it said. Both these booths are located in the Lalitpur district. In another village, Budhni Narahat, there is still confusion regarding 100 per cent voting due to technical issues, the statement said, adding there is a possibility that 100 per cent turnout will be declared there as well. DEO Tripathi said that further details will be confirmed once the technical issues are resolved.



Abducted Haryana businessman rescued in Greater Noida after car crash

A businessman abducted from Haryana's Faridabad was rescued by police in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida, officials said on Tuesday. The police were able to rescue the businessman after a chase, during which the car holding the hostage rammed into a divider, they said. "Rajiv Mittal, a resident of Haryana's Ballabgarh area, was on his way to the Delhi airport around 1 am to receive someone when he was abducted by four men," Additional DCP (Greater Noida) Ashok Kumar Sharma said. "The abductors held him inside the Mahindra Scorpio and kept wandering on the roads before reaching Greater Noida from where they were perhaps trying to go to Delhi," ADGP Sharma said. A team from Knowledge Park police station was on patrol duty near the Zero Point in Greater Noida when they spotted this suspicious vehicle in the area, the police said. "When an attempt was made to stop the car, they started driving the vehicle at a high speed and rammed into a divider," a police said.



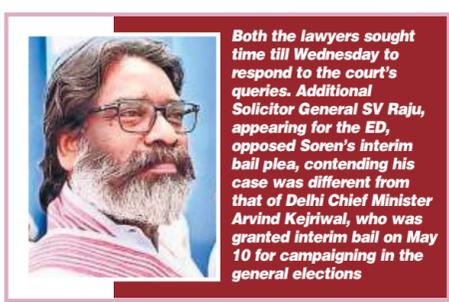
SUPREME COURT ASKS HEMANTH SOREN

Can court examine legality of arrest after cognisance of ED's complaint taken ?

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren whether a writ court can examine the legality of his arrest after the trial court has taken cognisance of the prosecution complaint filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the money laundering case against him related to an alleged land scam. A vacation bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma, which posted the matter for further hearing on Wednesday, asked Soren's counsel to first satisfy the court as to how interim bail can be granted to him for campaigning in the Lok Sabha poll when his application for regular bail has been dismissed. "The trial court, after taking a prima facie view that offence has been committed, has passed a judicial order taking

cognisance of prosecution complaint. What will happen to that judicial order especially when it has not been challenged? You have to satisfy us, can a writ court examine the legality of arrest after the judicial order taking cognisance has been passed," the bench told senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Arunabh Chowdhury, who appeared for Soren. Both the lawyers sought time till Wednesday to respond to the court's queries. Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, opposed Soren's interim bail plea, contending his case was different from that of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was granted interim bail on May 10 for campaigning in the general elections. He said the trial court had on April 4 taken cognisance of the prosecution complaint,



Both the lawyers sought time till Wednesday to respond to the court's queries. Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, opposed Soren's interim bail plea, contending his case was different from that of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who was granted interim bail on May 10 for campaigning in the general elections

ED's equivalent of a charge sheet, upon finding that a prima facie case was made out against Soren. Sibal said no offence of illegal possession of land is made out against Soren under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), which is not a predicate/scheduled offence. "I am raising a question of constitutional infirmity. It

relates to my freedom. It relates to taking away of my right to liberty under Article 21. Why can't I challenge my arrest under the PMLA, when no offence is made out. The writ court can interfere, if my rights are affected," he said. The senior lawyer submitted that if the court is not inclined to grant interim relief to Soren, then it will have to

hold that the moment an accused moves a regular bail application, his right to challenge section 19 of the PMLA (power of arrest) stands extinguished. "We need assistance on the issue from both the sides," the bench said while referring to the subsequent developments following Soren's arrest like dismissal by the high court of his plea challenging his arrest, cognisance of the prosecution complaint (charge sheet), and dismissal of his regular bail application. Sibal said the trial court has only taken a prima facie view that an offence has been committed but the petitioner's case is that his arrest itself is bad in law. "This is totally different. The material before the trial court does not disclose commission of offence under the PMLA and hence arrest is illegal," he said.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI probe into the nursing college scam in Madhya Pradesh has revealed that its officers were allegedly collecting Rs 2-10 lakh from each institute to give favourable reports after inspection, the central probe agency has said. CBI Deputy SP Ashish Prasad, inspectors Rahul Raj and Sushil Kumar Majoka, who were on attachment in the CBI from the MP Police, and Rishi Kant Asathe are among 22 persons booked by the agency in the case. Raj was arrested on Sunday. The CBI FIR also named the directors and chairpersons of eight colleges offering nursing courses, as well as staff and middlemen who collected and delivered the bribes on behalf of the inspection teams. "A case registered by CBI reinforces its zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and shows that CBI does not spare its own officials if found devi-



ating from core values of the organization," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement. The inspection teams were constituted on the orders of the Madhya Pradesh High Court to inspect the nursing colleges in the state. The CBI set up these teams, which, in addition to their officers, included staff nominated by the Indian Nursing Council and patwaris of the state. The CBI received information that the teams indulged in corrupt practices by giving suitability reports to ineligible institutes in return for huge

bribes. After verifying and discreetly observing the officers and agents, the agency registered an FIR. The source also informed that the bribe money collected by this cartel from each nursing college varies from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 10 lakh. This bribe money is shared among CBI officers and middlemen," the CBI FIR said. The agency also received input that in addition to the amount, Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000 was paid to each nursing officer and Rs 5,000 to Rs 20,000 to each patwari attached to the CBI team as a bribe.

BJP implicating TMC over attack on RKM in Jalpaiguri: Mamata

PNS ■ ASHOKENAGAR (WB)

Taking a strong view of the BJP's charges that the TMC was involved in vandalism of properties of Ramakrishna Mission in Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday accused the saffron camp of falsely implicating her party over an incident triggered by property dispute. Addressing an election rally in support of TMC candidate from Barasat Lok Sabha seat Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Banerjee said she had always been supportive of the RKM and other socio-religious organisations. Banerjee claimed that she renovated the residence of Sister Nivedita in Kolkata and the birthplace of Swami Vivekananda. "I don't discriminate among religions. I work



for renovating places of worship of all religions," she said. "I may go for defamation for maligning me and my party for spreading misinformation against our party. If anything happens in the state, the report comes to me as an administrator immediately. I did not get any such update. We have great respect for religious organisations like RKM and others," Banerjee said. Miscreants have vandalised the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission in

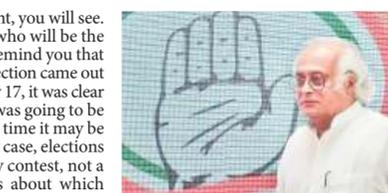
Jalpaiguri district and threatened monks and other employees at gunpoint to leave the place, an RKM official said Monday. The official said that a local land mafia was behind the early Sunday morning incident. "Many people donate property for religious reasons and then some dispute may break out. Police are investigating and action will be taken. But how dare you (BJP) implicate anyone without ascertaining the matter," she said while referring to the vandalism of the RKM ashram at Salugara in Jalpaiguri. About the minority appeasement charges against the TMC, she said, "I won't hanker for a certificate about my Hindu identity from BJP, but for me, all religions are the same. Every religion speaks about humanity and brotherhood."

'Bees saal baad' it will be '2004 moment' on June 4'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday said a "2004 moment" will be witnessed on June 4 with the INDIA bloc getting a clear mandate in the Lok Sabha polls, and asserted that a primary factor in the alliance's "strong performance" would be a "hugely impressive" turnaround in Uttar Pradesh. In an interview Ramesh also used cricketing terminology to claim that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was nurturing a "communal pitch" but his party had refused to play on it and had also successfully navigated his "googlies and bouncers". The Congress general secretary exuded confidence that the June 4 results day would be relieving of the "2004 moment" when the saffron party was unseated from power despite its 'India Shining' campaign.

"This is a 2004 moment, you will see. People keep asking me who will be the prime minister, I must remind you that the results of the 2004 election came out on May 13, 2004. By May 17, it was clear that Manmohan Singh was going to be the prime minister. This time it may be even quicker, and in any case, elections in India are not a beauty contest, not a 'kaun banega PM', it is about which coalition will get a mandate," Ramesh said. "We are a party-centred democracy. We are not like the American system, it is not a beauty contest between individuals, it is a choice between parties. This is a 2004 moment. In 1962, a film was released based on the Sherlock Holmes mystery -- 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' -- 'Bees saal Baad' starring Waheeda Rehman and Biswajeet...what happened in 2004, 'bees saal baad', you will see that repeating," he said.



Ramesh also expressed confidence that there would be a "dramatic turnaround" in Uttar Pradesh. Noting that the road to Delhi is through Lucknow because Uttar Pradesh has 80 seats, Ramesh pointed out that the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra had gotten a tremendous response in places such as Prayagraj, Varanasi, Pratapgarh, Lucknow, Amethi, Rae Bareilly, Aligarh, Moradabad, Amroha and Sambhal.

In Uttar Pradesh, youth, women, SCs, STs, OBCs came out in support of the yatra, he said. "I think there has been a complete disenchantment and disillusionment with the PM because the people are fed up with him. He (Modi) is tired, he is jaded and he is faded. One of the primary contributing factors in our strong performance on June 4 when the results came out, would be a hugely impressive turnaround in UP," Ramesh said. In the 2019 polls, the BJP had won 62 seats, NDA ally Apna Dal got 2 seats, while the Mahagathbandhan (SP, BSP, RLD) had won 15 seats and the Congress got one. Ramesh alleged that Modi had been indulging in polarisation throughout the election and preparing a "communal pitch", but the Congress refused to play on that and pursued its 'paach nyay' agenda.

KHARGE REPLIES TO MODI'S REMARK UPA I, II completed 2 terms under one PM Manmohan

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "five PMs in five years" remark, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Tuesday that similar things were said even in 2004 but the UPA government completed two full terms under one PM, Manmohan Singh. Addressing an election rally at Pratapgarh in Uttar Pradesh on May 16, Modi had said the INDIA bloc wants to make five prime ministers in five years and claimed that it will disintegrate after June 4. Kharge responded by rejecting Modi's claims. "In UPA I and UPA II, we were supported by other parties and we completed full term," Kharge told reporters here. For 10 years, there was one prime minister, a person who came from the land of Punjab, ran the country and changed its economy, he said about former prime minister Manmohan Singh. "Taking a dig at the BJP, he further said, 'Whereas they did nothing for 10 years.'"



Accompanied by former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Kharge arrived here after addressing an election rally in

Jagadhri in Haryana. On being asked that the ruling party leaders often ask who the opposition 'PM face' is, Kharge said, after the polls, the INDIA alliance partners will sit and decide this (if opposition wins the election). He said the BJP has been saying that the Congress or the INDIA alliance does not have a face like Modi. They used to say the same thing in 2004 when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the prime minister, the Congress president said. "After the polls, alliance partners will sit and decide. Like we ran UPA government, in similar manner we will do this," he said. Replying to a question, Kharge claimed that the INDIA bloc has gained good ground in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. "Everywhere we are gaining and they are losing. Our alliance will definitely stop the Modi government from coming to power," he said, and added, "the people are fighting against Modi and we are supporting them." Voting for sixth and seventh phases of elections will be held on May 25 and June 1 respectively

PM Modi 'anti-tribal', plotted to finish AAP, JMM: Kejriwal

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR (JHARKHAND)

Labelling Prime Minister Narendra Modi as "anti-tribal" who put the "tallest tribal leader of the country" behind the bars, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday accused him of plotting to topple elected governments of AAP and JMM. He also launched a scathing attack on the BJP and its spokesperson Sambit Patra for remarks that "Lord Jagannath is Modi's devotee" and urged people to "crush their arrogance". "When we cut down a forest, and other rangelands to overuse, misuse, and climate change. The degradation is driven largely by conversion of pastures to cropland and other land use changes due to population growth and urban expansion, rapidly rising food and fuel demands, excessive grazing, abandonment (end of maintenance by pastoralists), and policies that incentivize overexploitation."



"The PM put all his forces to keep me in the jail but I am a devotee of Bajrangbali and a miracle happened. I am on bail... soon Hemant Soren, whom he has kept in the jail, will be out... Soren's wife Kalpana is challenging Modi like 'Jhansi ki Rani'. No court has found Hemant Soren or Arvind Kejriwal guilty... it is nothing but PM Modi's 'gundagardi'," Kejriwal alleged. Alleging that "PM Modi hates tribals", the AAP supreme appealed to electors not to vote for the BJP as it would amount to betrayal with Jharkhand and the tribals.

Bangladesh MP goes missing in Kolkata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

An MP of Bangladesh, Anwarul Azim Anar, has been missing for the last few days after he arrived in the city for medical treatment on May 12, a senior official of the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata said. Anar, an MP of Bangladesh's ruling Awami League, has been missing since May 13, he said. "He came to Kolkata on May 12 for medical treatment

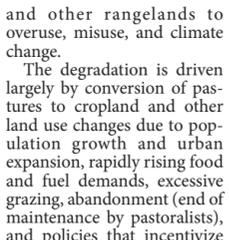


and was staying at his friend's place in Baranagar in the northern fringes of the city. On May 13, he went to meet someone but didn't return. His friend later lodged a police complaint," the official said. The official said though Anar had been missing for the last eight days, messages were sent from his phone to family members that he had left for New Delhi. "There is no trace of him. We are in touch with police and the authorities," he added

'Silent demise' of rangelands threatens climate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Up to 50 per cent of the world's rangelands - vast open areas suitable for grazing livestock - are estimated to be degraded, posing a severe threat to food supply and survival of billions of people, the UN warned in a new report on Tuesday. Launched in Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification's (UNCCD) 'Global Land Outlook Thematic Report' attributed the degradation of the immense natural pastures



and other rangelands to overuse, misuse, and climate change. The degradation is driven largely by conversion of pastures to cropland and other land use changes due to population growth and urban expansion, rapidly rising food and fuel demands, excessive grazing, abandonment (end of maintenance by pastoralists), and policies that incentivize overexploitation. "When we cut down a forest, when we see a 100-year-old tree fall, it rightly evokes an



emotional response in many of us. The conversion of ancient rangelands, on the other hand,

happens in 'silence' and generates little public reaction," said UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw. "Sadly, these expansive landscapes and the pastoralists and livestock breeders who depend on them, are usually under-appreciated," Thiaw said. Pastoralist communities are frequently overlooked, lack a voice in policy-making that directly affects their livelihoods, are marginalised, and are even often seen as outsiders in their own lands, he added. Covering 54 per cent of all

land, the rangelands include savannas, shrublands, wetlands, tundra and deserts. Altogether, these lands account for one sixth of global food production and represent nearly one third of the planet's carbon reservoir. Two billion people - small-scale herders, ranchers and farmers, often poor and marginalised - depend on healthy rangelands worldwide. In many West African countries, livestock production employs 80 per cent of the population.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Iran at crossroads

Ebrahim Raisi leaves behind a rich legacy and an uncertain future for his country

Iran is grappling with an unprecedented political crisis as both President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian were tragically found dead in a helicopter crash under mysterious circumstances. The sudden loss of these key figures has plunged Iran into uncertainty, creating a significant leadership void and fuelling various speculations and conspiracy theories. Raisi, known for his hardline stance and involvement in controversial actions, leaves behind a complex legacy. His death, alongside Amir-Abdollahian, not only creates a leadership void but also raises questions about the trajectory of Iranian politics and foreign relations. The circumstances surrounding the helicopter crash, which occurred in heavy fog near the Azerbaijan border, have fuelled speculation. Given Raisi's past, including his involvement in mass executions in 1988 and some contentious actions such as uranium enrichment and missile attacks on Israel, the possibility of foul play cannot be easily dismissed. Conspiracy theories abound, ranging from internal power struggles to foreign interference.



President Raisi had numerous domestic adversaries, from moderates marginalised by his policies to conservatives critical of his presidency. Israel, a long-standing rival of Iran, also enters the conjecture. Recent escalations, including the assassination of an Iranian General by Israel and subsequent missile exchanges, add fuel to speculations of Israeli involvement. Mossad has conducted such operations, but assassinating a head of state is a risky move even by Israel's standards. Both Israel and US Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer have denied involvement.

The big question is Raisi's succession and Iran's trajectory going forward. Md Mokhber has been appointed the Acting President, while Ali Bagheri Kani, who was Deputy Foreign Minister, has been elevated in the Ministry. The election date has been set for June 28. Raisi was a hardliner cleric but by no means a saint. During the summer of 1988, Raisi was a key member of the "Death Commission" responsible for the execution of thousands of political prisoners, primarily members of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (MEK) and other leftist groups. A prominent figure in Iran's power structure, Raisi was poised for further advancement until his horrifying death. While his demise creates speculation about the successor to Supreme Leader 85-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, it's unlikely to significantly alter Iran's political trajectory. The conservative-dominated system will prioritise continuity and stability, albeit amidst internal jockeying for influence. Raisi's successor faces a daunting agenda amid economic turmoil and societal discontent, with the spectre of continued international sanctions looming large. With internal dissent simmering and external pressures mounting, the succession process becomes pivotal. The coming days will decide if any discernible change takes place or if the old order continues where moderates and leftists have no role to play.

PICTALK



A man feeds a parrot's chick that fell off a tree, in Guwahati

Can AAP survive its ultimate resilience test?



KALYANI SHANKAR

As Kejriwal presents himself as an underdog fighting against perceived persecution, this election will be pivotal in determining the trajectory of both his career and the AAP

Delhi's Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, has overcome numerous obstacles in the past decade. Yet, his unwavering resilience has been a beacon of inspiration. He and his party are currently facing the biggest crisis in the liquor policy case. Despite the challenges, Kejriwal's political journey is a testament to his indomitable spirit. From a brief 49-day tenure and losing all seven seats in Delhi in 2014, he orchestrated a remarkable comeback, securing 67 out of 70 seats in the 2015 Delhi Assembly polls.

The arrest of Kejriwal in the Delhi liquor policy case last month, which involves allegations of corruption and misuse of power, has cast a shadow of uncertainty over the future of the Aam Aadmi Party. Will this be the end of the party's road, or can they weather this storm and continue their political journey?

The Apex court's decision to grant bail to Kejriwal, allowing him to campaign for his party in the ongoing elections, is a beacon of hope for Kejriwal's supporters. This positive development paves the way for Kejriwal's success, especially if he garners public sympathy. Kejriwal presents himself as the underdog, highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's alleged persecution and his colleagues' imprisonment. Kejriwal and his party have been trying to show the public how he was mistreated in prison and how he was denied insulin and his diabetes medication.

Kejriwal's arrest is the biggest crisis for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) since its founding in November 2012. The party has faced numerous challenges, including internal conflicts, allegations of corruption and the need to maintain its image as a party for the common man. Over the years, many of Kejriwal's associates from the India Against Corruption (IAC) days have been dumped and he remains a des[pt. Kejriwal has introduced a personality cult centred around him. The Aam Aadmi Party's rise to power has been quite dramatic.



It originated from the India Against Corruption movement led by Anna Hazare in 2012. The party came into power within months, but Kejriwal's resignation within 48 hours was unsurprising. However, he returned in 2015 and 2019, winning the Delhi Assembly polls with a significant majority. These events have sparked curiosity about the party's political trajectory and Kejriwal's resilience. Kejriwal has always been ambitious. He positioned himself as a prime ministerial candidate and even ran against Modi in Benares in 2014 but lost. This bold move significantly boosted Kejriwal's and his party's profile.

In the recently formed INDIA coalition, a significant political alliance that aims to challenge the dominance of the BJP, the AAP stands out as the only party other than Congress to rule more than one State. This alliance could pave the way for his party's expansion beyond Delhi and Punjab. However, currently, AAP will have a significant political impact in only 20 constituencies. Kejriwal's national influence depends on his party's performance.

The AAP currently holds one seat in the Lok Sabha and ten in the Upper House. The party has expanded its influence to other States and was granted national party status in April 2023. The Aam Aadmi Party's rise to power in Indian politics is fascinating. Unlike the BJP, or the Left parties, it has no solid ideological stance. It has not relied on regional or socialist backgrounds like the AIADMK, DMK, Samajwadi Party, Biju Janata Dal, or Rashtriya Janata Dal. Instead, it has gained power by championing development and the freebie culture.



THE AAM AADMI PARTY IS NOT JUST A POLITICAL ENTITY. IT IS POISED TO FILL THE VOID LEFT BY CONGRESS AND TARGET POLITICALLY BIPOLAR STATES LIKE HIMACHAL PRADESH, HARYANA, RAJASTHAN AND GUJARAT

The AAP is now contesting elections in Delhi with the Congress party, while Punjab is contesting 13 seats independently. These alliances offer a promising outlook for Kejriwal's political journey. The Aam Aadmi Party is not just a political entity. It is poised to fill the void left by Congress and target politically bipolar States like Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Modi has promised a "Modi ki guarantee," while Kejriwal has outlined a ten-point agenda. This agenda includes "freeing" Indian land from Chinese occupation if the I.N.D.I.A. bloc forms the Government at the Centre, attaining Statehood for Delhi, ensuring a 24/7 power supply and providing free education. These promises reflect Kejriwal's focus on national issues. The Delhi liquor policy case has become inconvenient for the AAP, and convenient for the BJP, as elections are underway. It raises questions like, is it the end of the road? Can the second rung of leaders like Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bhardwaj, Sandeep Pathak, Raghav Chadha and Atishi Run the party, or will Kejriwal, with his usual luck, return? Kejriwal is optimistic and hopes that luck will be on his side. This positive outlook has served him well so far.

His popularity will rise if his party secures a respectable number of seats in the current Lok Sabha polls. Only the voters can decide and their decision will shape the future of Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party in Indian politics.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MALIWAL CASE

Madam — Apropos the editorial, "An Intricate Puzzle," published on May 20. Wherein the Pioneer has truly asserted that the incident is likely to have ramifications beyond immediate political dynamics, potentially influencing voter perception and future elections. The cases booked under IPC Sections 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), 354D (stalking), filing the FIR under sections 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation) and 509 (word, gesture or intent to insult) against Bibhav Kumar aide Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the attack on Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal reflect seriousness.

Picking up Bibhav Kumar from the official residence of the Chief Minister and seizing CCTV, DVR, mobile etc. can prove helpful in revealing the secrets of the crime. But it seems that as part of a conspiracy, Bibhav Kumar was hiding at Chief Minister Kejriwal's house and was engaged in destroying the evidence. Delhi Police should make every effort to collect crime data by using the latest digital technology and present concrete evidence before the court. So that the perpetrators of this serious crime can be punished as per the rule of the law.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

RISING LIFE EXPECTANCY

Madam — An individual's life span is dictated by a myriad of factors. According to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study, global life expectancy is expected to increase by 4.9 years in men and 4.2 years in women by the year 2050. From 73.6 in 2022, there may be a jump to 78.1 in 2050. This trend will tend to be more exemplified in nations with a history of very low life expectancy. It is no secret that nowadays people are more cautious about their health. While diseases and disorders have taught them lessons, mortality and morbidity around them have disciplined their lives. Past pandemics, in particular COVID-19, have instilled a sense of fear

Secularism over politics



Apropos the news article, "Economic crisis takes a backseat in elections", published on May 20, this is my response. It is a pity that religion rather than economic issues take the stage in the election campaign for the ruling party at the Centre in our secular country. Earlier in feudalism, a king or a feudal lord used to favour his religion over other religions. History witnessed that such a practice spelt disaster on every occasion. The people felt the need for a complete separa-

tion of religion from politics. This gave birth to secularism. All modern progressive nations have embraced secularism after learning how painful it would be to deviate from its path. Mixing religion and politics destroys accountability, enables corruption and favours one religion over others, undermining democracy. Politicians should be elected based on policy, not religion and churches should focus on spirituality, not politics. It divides the citizens and damages the unity and integrity of the country. It does not allow the policymakers to follow the progressive ideals of equality and fraternity. Rather, it attracts negative things such as discrimination, marginalisation, conflict and unrest. Some of our neighbouring countries have experienced the danger of not walking in the path of secularism. India must follow secularism and let religion be a personal matter between God and a person.

Sujit De | Kolkata

as well as responsibility in them like never before.

An extended lifespan increases susceptibility to non-communicable diseases like cancer, diabetes and hypertension. As life expectancy in India is projected to rise, addressing behavioural and metabolic risks is crucial for healthy aging over the next two decades. Health outcomes can be significantly improved by efficiently addressing the risk factors. Furthermore, a safe environment and adequate vaccination can go a long way.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

HAPPINESS IS A SKILL

Madam — Apropos the feature article, "Connecting the Mind and Body," by Ravi Valluri, published on May 20, this is my response. Happiness is a skill that human beings must teach themselves. A lot of people spend so much time ruminating about the past or thinking about the future that they forget to enjoy the most beautiful gift they have received from God—the present moment. Our society is structured in a way that keeps reminding us of our

failures in the past and makes us anxious about our future. We need to consciously make efforts to silence our minds by incorporating daily practices into our daily routines.

Spending time in nature is one of the best-known ways to reconnect with your inner self. Meditating for 20 - 30 minutes daily can also provide you with a treasure trove of peace. Journaling can help you manage your emotions and teach you to focus on the present moment. Expressing gratitude to loved ones for being a part of your lives also goes a long way in nurturing the relationships you have with people that eventually become a source of joy for you. Exercising daily is also a good way to take care of your health. Staying away from social media and all the unrealistic expectations it imposes on you is imperative. All these practices when done every day can help you augment your happiness levels and enjoy life to the fullest.

Charvi Kathuria | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The rise of online internships for students



AARUL MALVIYA

Students are opting for online internships to gain practical experience, develop crucial skills and prepare themselves for the evolving job market

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, students are increasingly recognising the importance of proactive engagement in shaping their future careers. Embracing the adage of "building a door" to their professional aspirations, school students are turning to online internships as a means to gain valuable experiential learning opportunities and prepare themselves for the dynamic job market that awaits them upon graduation.



Online internships have witnessed a surge in relevance in recent years, offering school students an array of benefits that extend beyond traditional in-person placements.

Flexibility and Accessibility: Unlike traditional internships with fixed schedules, online internships provide students with a flexible work environment tailored to accommodate their schedules. This flexibility allows them to optimise productivity according to their peak hours of concentration while balancing other commitments such as classes or extracurricular activities. Additionally, the absence of commute time associated with virtual internships fur-

ther enhances students' ability to dedicate time to their roles.

Skill Development : Engaging in tasks aligned with their field of interest, interns acquire practical experience and hone essential competencies crucial for professional success. By demonstrating initiative and self-reliance in completing assigned projects remotely, interns showcase their readiness to thrive in diverse work environments. These experiences not only deepen their expertise but also bolster their resumes, setting them apart in competitive job markets.

Access to Talent Beyond Geographical Boundaries: Online internships offer employers access to a diverse pool of talent unrestricted by geographical boundaries. This expanded reach enriches organisations with diverse perspectives, skills and cultur-

al insights, fostering innovation and collaboration with-in teams. Additionally, it prepares companies for the evolving dynamics of the modern workforce by developing remote work capabilities.

Exploration of Career Paths: Online internships serve as a platform for students to explore different career paths and gain insight into various industries. This exploration phase allows students to clarify their interests, identify strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions about their future career goals.

Networking Opportunities: Despite being remote, online internships provide students with networking opportunities that can be instrumental in their career development. Interacting with professionals within their chosen industry, connecting with fellow interns and building relationships with mentors and supervisors can lead to mentorship opportunities, job referrals and valuable insights into industry trends.

Innovative Learning Experiences: Through inter-active projects, virtual meet-

ings and online training sessions, online internships offer innovative learning experiences that complement traditional classroom education. These immersive experiences bridge the gap between theory and practice, fostering critical thinking.

Cultural Exposure: Working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds exposes students to different perspectives, communication styles and work cultures, enriching their understanding of the global economy's interconnectedness.

Engaging in online internships significantly boosts students' resumes and bolsters their prospects for future employment. These experiences serve as tangible evidence of their initiative, adaptability and capacity to thrive in dynamic work environments, positioning them as desirable candidates poised for success in their chosen career paths. Thus, online internships not only enrich students' skill sets but also empower them to navigate the complexities of the modern job market.

(The author is the Founder, Zamit; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN SPIRITUALITY CAN HELP US AVOID DEAD ENDS

Through spiritual purity, we can rise above limitations and obstacles



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We all end in death, i.e. our material bodies must die at some time in future, but we should avoid a dead end also, i.e. that leads to something not so good. We, souls, will go on in new bodies, but the problem is in what bodies and where. Are we going to a place where there is perpetual unrest? There are many areas in the world, which are in perpetual turmoil. Place of birth is one problem. Then, in what bodies are we born? Even in human bodies, there can be many handicaps like deformities, genetic defects and surely not-so-good looks, personality, level of intelligence, etc. There is a world of difference between ourselves and our material bodies. We, souls, are journeying eternally in various bodies, but our bodies have limited lifespans only. This thought should be uppermost in our minds. We should try to make sure that we make progress and avoid our end in a worse situation, condition, form or State.

Let us see how we can ensure it. We, souls, are parts of God. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7) What does this mean? That we are very special, being parts of God. Imagine being the son of a very rich and cultured person. God is infinitely superior than any parent can be. God will always be favourable to us if we take His shelter because we have free will. In the case of parents, we receive shelter automatically, but in the case of God, it is a matter of choice. It shouldn't be too difficult to make this choice, but it is. Why? Taking shelter requires some basics. We must give up our egos; we need to do spiritual practices to qualify for God's attention. There is another big problem. Our lives are almost entirely controlled by our fate, which is what we have accumulated in our previous life/lives. One may question this premise. Yes, there is free will and liberty to do what we desire, feel or decide. But all these are controlled by our natures, which again are parts of our fate. What is the evidence? A person given to get angry readily continues to do so throughout his life, unless God intervenes on his or her behalf. And God wouldn't unless we take His shelter. Where does it leave us? In not a pleasant place. Life will go on almost automatically with not much improvement.



Are we doomed? We are not. God is very kind; He has left an opening for us; we just have to get started. We must have a desire. God has arranged to preach everywhere. If we bother to go and listen, we will be convinced. And the start is very simple. We just need to become better in whatever we do, not just in our work. In spiritual parlance, we must try to increase the mode of goodness in ourselves. Our whole being is made up of three modes, which are goodness, passion and darkness. They are in different percentages, with the mode of passion being predominant in most of us. It is no wonder that we are quite passionate about what we think, do, etc. Now we should try to be good in everything. For example, if we are habituated to eating foods, which are bitter, sour, salty, very hot, pungent, horse, etc. (17.9), we should choose tasty, not dry, not having too much liquid foods. (17.8) Similar improvements are required in what we speak, see, hear, etc. As purity increases, we will begin to get attracted to God and spiritual acts.

The next big decision is to control our egos. This is the biggest hindrance in taking shelter from God. Arjuna had a similar problem. His ego would not allow him to accept God's instructions. Lord Krishna had to warn him, "If you will not heed on account of the feeling of being the doer, you will perish." (18.58) Is this not the fate of almost all of us? Who can change fate? God can and only He can in a substantial way. There is no one to share one's tough times. The solution again suggests itself. Love God and you will be able to love others as well. You won't always look for faults in others. This attitude change will help in becoming friends with family members. The conclusion is: that God is the solution if we wish to avoid the dead ends of our lives. Will we take God's shelter?

(The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Raisi's tragic demise clouds Iran's future



SANTOSH MATHEW

The enigmatic President of Iran breathed his last in a helicopter crash, leaving behind a legacy as complex as the country he governed



In the heart of the Middle East, where history and geopolitics are deeply intertwined, a towering figure met a tragic end, sending shockwaves across the globe. Ebrahim Raisi, the enigmatic President of Iran, breathed his last in a helicopter crash, leaving behind a legacy as complex as the region he governed. Raisi's rise to power was nothing short of remarkable. Born in 1960, he emerged from humble beginnings to become one of Iran's most influential figures. His journey began in the hallowed halls of Tehran's judiciary, where he earned a reputation for his unwavering commitment to Islamic principles and his uncompromising stance against corruption.

Raisi truly made his mark on the political stage. In June 2021, he ascended to the presidency, promising to usher in a new era of prosperity and stability for his beloved nation. His tenure was marked by bold foreign policies and ambitious domestic reforms, as he sought to solidify Iran's position as a regional powerhouse. At the heart of Raisi's vision was Iran's role as a champion of Shia Islam, a beacon of resistance against oppression and injustice. Under his leadership, Iran forged alliances with like-minded nations, offering support to movements and groups fighting for their rights across the Middle East.

However, amidst the triumphs and accolades, tragedy struck with devastating force. On a fateful day, as Raisi embarked on a routine journey to Azerbaijan, fate intervened. His helicopter plummeted from the sky, claiming his life and those of several others onboard. The crash sent shockwaves rippling through Iran and beyond, leaving a nation in mourning and the world reeling from the loss of a visionary leader.

As the dust settled and the wreckage was cleared, the full extent of Raisi's legacy came into focus. His death left a void in Iran's political landscape, one that would be difficult to fill. But beyond the borders of his homeland, Raisi's impact was felt far and wide. In the halls of power in Moscow and Ankara, Raisi was revered



RAISI WIELDED IMMENSE INFLUENCE, SHAPING IRAN'S DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES WITH A FIRM HAND. HIS PRESIDENCY WAS MARKED BY A SERIES OF INITIATIVES AIMED AT STRENGTHENING IRAN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND REDUCING RELIANCE ON FOREIGN POWERS

and the right-hand man of Ayatollah Khamenei. As the Ayatollah's trusted confidant, Raisi wielded immense influence, shaping Iran's domestic and foreign policies with a firm hand. His presidency was marked by a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening Iran's economic independence and reducing reliance on foreign powers. He focused on bolstering the country's industrial base, improving infrastructure and promoting technological innovation.

On the international front, Raisi pursued a policy of strategic partnerships, particularly with Russia and China. These alliances were seen as a counterbalance to Western influence and as a means of securing economic and military support. Raisi's administration also prioritised the expansion of Iran's influence in regional conflicts, providing support to allied groups in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. His efforts to position Iran as a regional leader were often viewed through the lens of resistance against Western hegemony. Despite his achievements, Raisi's tenure was not without controversy. His hardline stance on social and political issues drew criticism from both domestic and international observers. Human rights organisations frequently condemned his administration for its treatment of political dissidents and minority groups. The suppression of protests and the enforcement of strict social codes were seen as hallmarks of his governance.

Raisi's death left a nation at a crossroads. The mourning period was marked by both grief and reflection, as Iranians contemplated the future of their country without the man who had steered it through turbulent times. The

question of succession loomed large, with potential candidates vying for the position of leadership. The uncertainty surrounding Iran's political future was palpable, with analysts speculating on the potential shifts in policy and power dynamics. In the international arena, Raisi's passing was met with a range of reactions. Allies expressed their condolences and reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining strong ties with Iran. In contrast, adversaries viewed his death as an opportunity to reassess their strategies towards the country. The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, already fraught with complexity, faced the prospect of further upheaval. Despite the challenges, there was a sense of resilience among the Iranian populace. The nation's history of overcoming adversity served as a reminder of its enduring strength.

Raisi's legacy, with its blend of conservatism, populism and strategic acumen, would continue to influence the country's trajectory. His vision of an Iran that stands firm against external pressures and champions the cause of Shia Islam would remain a guiding principle for future leaders. As the world continued to navigate the aftermath of Raisi's death, one thing was clear: his impact on Iran and the broader Middle East would be felt for years to come. The region, shaped by his policies and leadership, would continue to evolve, reflecting the enduring legacy of a man whose life and career were as multifaceted as the history of the land he loved. In the end, Ebrahim Raisi's story was a testament to the complexities of leadership in a region where past and present are forever intertwined.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

Rajasthan healthcare challenges despite Government efforts

The Government's health programmes fail to sufficiently support rural women and girls affected by anaemia, a significant public health concern

In Rajasthan, the healthcare system is facing significant challenges, particularly in rural areas. Despite numerous Government initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access and quality, the benefits of these programs are not reaching their intended targets.

This issue is especially pronounced among women and adolescent girls suffering from anaemia. While the State Government has enacted the Right to Health Act and conducts monthly campaigns to combat anaemia, these efforts have yet to bring about substantial improvements in the health sector across rural Rajasthan. An example of this can be seen in the village of Manoharpura located just four kilometres



NASEEM BANO

from the heritage city of Udaipur. This village falls under the Badgaon Panchayat and has a population of around one thousand.

Predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Tribes, the village has a low level of education, which impacts the awareness of its residents. Despite its proximity to the district headquarters, Manoharpura lags significantly in the health sector. Many families in the village lack even basic identification documents, which prevents them from accessing healthcare services.

The reason for not having documents is that most children in the village were born at home rather than in hospitals, resulting in the absence of birth certificates and Aadhar cards. For young girls



and women, the State Government has launched the 'I Am Shakti Udaan Yojana'. This scheme aims to empower economically weaker women and girls and the goal is to include about 2.8

million women and adolescents in this benefit by 2024. As part of this scheme, menstruating girls and women aged 11 to 45 receive sanitary pads. However, most adolescent girls and women miss

out on this benefit. Due to both a lack of awareness and poverty, many girls still use dirty clothes during menstruation instead of buying pads. Additionally, about half of the adolescent girls and women in the village suffer from anaemia, despite the State Government's monthly Shakti Diwas events aimed at eradicating anaemia in Rajasthan. It is important to note that various activities are organised under this campaign to reduce anaemia rates among children, women and adolescents. 'Shakti Diwas' events are held at Anganwadi centres, Government schools, health and wellness centres, sub-health centres, primary health centres, CHCs, dispensaries and sub-district and district hospitals. These

events include anaemia screenings, haemoglobin tests and treatment, distribution of iron tablets and activities to raise awareness and promote behaviour change regarding anaemia.

On 'Shakti Diwas', targeted activities are conducted for children aged 6 months to 59 months, out-of-school children aged 5 to 9 years, adolescents aged 10 to 19 years and married women aged 20 to 24 years. Efforts are also made to combat anaemia in pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers.

However, this issue extends beyond Manoharpura village to the entire Udaipur district, where ineffective implementation has affected district rankings. During the health department's monthly review

meeting last November, the CEO Kirti Rathore expressed dissatisfaction with the situation. She emphasised the urgent need to ensure that benefits reach all children, adolescents and women and to strictly enforce measures to make the district anaemia-free.

These shortcomings reveal that Manoharpura residents are still not receiving full healthcare benefits and the village has not met its health targets. Addressing this requires both administrative action and increased community awareness, involving as many families as possible.

(The writer is a social worker from Grameen Awam Samajik Vikas Sansthan, Ajmer; views are personal. Charkha Features)

MONEY MATTERS

Gold, silver retreat from record levels amid profit taking

Gold and silver prices retreated from record highs in the national capital on Tuesday, with the yellow metal plunging by Rs 550 per 10 grams due to profit-taking and weak global trends. According to HDFC Securities, gold prices were impacted by hawkish comments from one of the US Fed Reserve members, who suggested that interest rates will need to continue at current levels for a longer period to bring inflation back to target. Gold prices declined by Rs 550 to Rs 74,650 per 10 grams. It had settled at Rs 75,200 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also declined Rs 1,600 to Rs 94,500 per kg. In the previous session, it had settled at Rs 96,100 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets were trading at Rs 74,650 per 10 grams, down by Rs 550 against the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at US\$ 2,420 per ounce, down US\$ 22 from the previous close.



Rupee rises 6 paise against US\$ as crude oil prices ease

The rupee appreciated 6 paise to close at 83.31 against the US dollar on Tuesday following a weak greenback against major currencies overseas and softening crude oil prices in international markets. However, a sluggish trend in the domestic equity markets restricted the sharp upside in the local currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened strong at 83.32 and touched an intraday high of 83.26 and a low of 83.36. The domestic unit finally settled at 83.31 (provisional), a gain of 6 paise from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee had settled at 83.37 against the US dollar. The forex market was closed on Monday on account of general elections. "A decline in crude oil prices and fresh foreign inflows also supported the rupee. US Dollar softened on rate cut expectations by Fed but hawkish comments by Fed officials supported the US dollar at lower levels," Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said.



India's global travel & tourism index rank up at 39th: WEF index

India's rank on the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024 has risen to 39th place, with global tourism activities returning to pre-pandemic levels, the annual report showed on Tuesday. While the US topped the list, India is ranked highest in South Asia and among the lower-middle-income economies, the WEF said. India was ranked 54th in the previously published index in 2021, though changes made to the index parameters limit its comparability to earlier years. After the US, Spain, Japan, France and Australia figure among the top five in the 2024 list. The index, prepared in collaboration with the University of Surrey, showed India is highly price-competitive (18th) and boasts competitive Air Transport (26th) and Ground and Port (25th) infrastructure. In particular, India's strong Natural (6th), Cultural (9th) and Non-Leisure (9th) Resources help drive travel, and the country is only one of three to score in the top 10 for all the resource pillars, the WEF said.



Sensex edges lower nearly 53 pts amid weak trends

Benchmark BSE Sensex declined by nearly 53 points in a volatile trade on Tuesday amid weak trends from Asian and European markets and fresh foreign fund outflows. The 30-share Sensex declined 52.63 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 73,953.31 as 18 of its constituents declined while 12 ended with gains. The index gyrated around 426 between a high of 74,189.19 and a low of 73,762.37 in day trade. The broader Nifty of NSE, however, closed higher by 27.05 points or 0.12 per cent to 22,529.05, driven by gains in metal shares. As many as 27 Nifty shares declined while 23 closed with gains.

India on cusp of long-awaited economic take-off: RBI

India is on the cusp of long-awaited take-off on the back of rising aggregate demand, and non-food spending in rural economy, according to the Reserve Bank of India May Bulletin released on Tuesday. The outlook for the global economy is turning fragile as the descent of inflation is stalling, re-igniting risks to global financial stability, said an article on 'State of the Economy' published in the Bulletin. Capital flows have become volatile as nervous investors turn risk averse, it added. The article is prepared by a team led by Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra. The article further said "there is a growing optimism that India is on the cusp of a long-awaited economic take-



The article further said "there is a growing optimism that India is on the cusp of a long-awaited economic take-off" as recent indicators are pointing to a quickening of the momentum of aggregate demand.

off" as recent indicators are pointing to a quickening of the momentum of aggregate demand. It notes that for the first time in at least two years, rural demand for fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) has outpaced urban markets -- in the quarter just gone by. FMCG volume growth of 6.5 per cent was driven by rural growth of 7.6 per cent relative to urban growth of 5.7 per cent on the back of robust demand for home and personal care products. Turning to private investment, for listed private manufacturing companies, retained earnings remained the major source of funds during the second half of 2023-24, it said. Results that have been declared by listed corporate so-

far indicate that they closed the financial year 2023-24 with the highest growth in quarterly revenues registered in January-March 2024 year-on-year as well as sequentially. "A modest easing of headline inflation in the reading for April 2024 confirmed our expectation that an uneven pace of alignment with the target is underway," the authors said.

India to be US\$ 1 trn digital economy by FY28

IndiaAI mission value doubled to Rs 20k cr: IT Min

India's digital economy is growing at 2.8 per cent per annum and is expected to reach US\$ 1 trillion by 2027-28, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said at an outreach programme. The minister further said the value of the IndiaAI mission will be doubled to Rs 20,000 crore from Rs 10,000 crore. The government earlier expected India to reach the US\$ 1 trillion-mark by 2026-27 but the target has been moved by a year due to various reasons, including the Covid-19 pandemic, he said. "Digital economy is growing at the rate of 2.8 per cent because of the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. His vision laid down in 2015 has



played out well. We are already the fastest growing digital economy of the world. We are aiming to be US\$ 1 trillion digital economy by 2027-28," Chandrasekhar said. He was speaking at "Vishesh Sampark Abhiyan" on Monday evening at Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri's official residence. The event was attended by leaders of about 300 ITs, startups and the technology industry. The minister said the prime minister has already approved Rs 1 lakh crore as seed fund, which will be invested in research and development for fuel innovation and India AI mission with a total value of Rs 20,000 crore.

'Baggage delivery time at 6 major airports improves significantly'

The baggage delivery time at Delhi, Mumbai and four other major airports has improved significantly in the last four months, with more than 90 per cent of the passengers getting their baggage arriving within 30 minutes of an aircraft landing, according to the civil aviation ministry. The ministry has also advised all domestic and international airlines operating at other airports to improve baggage delivery timings. In January, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) started an exercise to boost the baggage delivery

system of the domestic airlines at the country's six major airports -- Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. The exercise under the aegis of the civil aviation ministry was started after it was noticed that baggage was getting delivered late after the landing of a plane. As per the global standards prescribed by IATA (International Air Transport Association) and the provision under the OMDA (Operation, Management and Development Agreement) with airports, baggage should be delivered to passengers within 30 minutes of the arrival of the aircraft.



Govt needs to further expand PLI scheme to make India 'Global Drone Hub': Report

The government needs to expand the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme and develop an ecosystem to realise the goal of making India a global drone hub, a report said on Tuesday. An incentive of Rs 120 crore spread over three financial years was provided for Indian manufacturers of drone and drone components under the PLI Scheme notified on September 30, 2021. As per the Ministry of Civil Aviation projections, the Indian drone manufacturing industry is expected to reach Rs 900 crore by 2025 from just Rs 60 crore in 2020-21, according to a study conducted by Nexgen Exhibitions.



It also noted that the Indian drone market is expected to grow at 22.15 per cent CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) during the 2024-30 period. With innovation and expansion of its application portfolio, India has the potential of becoming the global drone hub by 2030, it stated. The study highlighted that the key to realising India's

vision lies in boosting the domestic drone ecosystem. Other major factors are the expansion of the PLI scheme, government procurement, and pushing the Make in India initiative, it stated. The application of drones is already proven in the fields of Border Surveillance, Rescue Disaster Management, and COVID management etc. The drone services industry's operations in logistics, data processing, and traffic management etc are far bigger in scale and will outshine the other related sectors very soon, the report highlighted. Around 250 drones and unmanned systems manufacturers, anti-drone radar, guns and jammers innovators, component, wires, motors, sensors,

CCTV suppliers, software developers for drones and unmanned systems, drones as service providing companies, GPS and Geospatial solutions providers participated in the survey. Institutes developing drones, defence research labs manufacturing drones, and aerospace companies like flight control, and simulator developers were also part of the survey. The survey was conducted across 10 states - Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The survey also reached out to foreign companies from the Middle East, Europe, the UK, the US and Australia.



BHEL net profit falls over 25 pc to Rs 489.6 cr in Q4

State-owned Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) on Tuesday reported an over 25 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to Rs 489.62 crore in the March quarter, mainly due to higher expenses. Its consolidated net profit stood at Rs 658.02 crore in the quarter ended on March 31, 2023, according to a regulatory filing. Total expenses of the firm rose to Rs 7,794.11 crore in the quarter from Rs 7,411.64 crore

in the same period a year ago. Total income in the quarter rose marginally to Rs 8,416.84 crore in the quarter from Rs 8,338.61 crore in the year-ago period. The board has recommended a final dividend at the rate of 12.50 per cent or 25 paise per share with a face value of Rs 2 each on paid-up share capital of the company for fiscal year 2023-24, it stated. Its consolidated net profit in the fiscal 2023-24 also declined to Rs 282.22 crore from Rs 654.12 crore in 2022-23.

IREDA mulls FPO to raise funds to meet future capital requirement

State-owned non-banking finance firm Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) is mulling follow on public offer (FPO) as well as perpetual debt to meet its future capital requirements and onward lending for renewables. The Rs 2,150 crore initial public offering (IPO) was oversubscribed about 39 times in November 2023. Addressing a media round table discussion, IREDA Chairman and Managing Director Pradip Kumar Das said the company is planning an FPO as well as perpetual



debt for meeting future capital requirements of the company and onward lending mainly for renewable energy projects. He further said the loan disbursements are expected during the current fiscal year in view of the government's push for renewable energy projects in the country. He said the company's loan

disbursements increased from Rs 16,071 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 21,639 crore in 2022-23 and further to Rs 25,089 crore in 2023-24. Loan disbursements by IREDA increased about 16 per cent in 2023-24, he said, adding that the company has a borrowing plan of Rs 24,200 crore for the current fiscal.

Sebi amends rule to facilitate ease of doing biz for cos planning IPOs

To facilitate ease of doing business for companies planning IPOs, Sebi has said any change in the size of offer for sale (OFS) requiring fresh filing will be based on only one of the criteria -- either issue size in rupee or number of shares. Further, promoter group entities and non-individual shareholders holding more than 5 per cent of the post-offer equity share capital can be permitted to contribute towards the shortfall in minimum promoters' contribution (MPC) without being identi-

fied as a promoter, according to a notification issued by Sebi. Companies promoted by entrepreneurs often have sev-

er rounds of funding prior to listing their equity shares on the stock exchanges. In such situations, the promoters' holding may fall short of the minimum promoter contribution i.e., 20 per cent of the post-offer equity share capital. While the current ICDR (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) rule permits certain categories of investors to contribute equity shares held by them towards the shortfall, further flexibility has been provided. In addition, equity shares from the conversion of compulsorily convertible securities held for a year before filing the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) are to be considered for meeting MPC requirements.



Revamping of BOT is tactical move to attract private capex: Ind-Ra

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) on Tuesday said the revamping of the build-operate-transfer (BOT) model is a tactical move to attract private capex, which is estimated to surpass Rs 1 trillion by 2030, as per the government. According to the rating agency, during the past seven years, the government has successfully rolled out about 400 Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM) road projects in India, worth over Rs 4 trillion. This approach has balanced risk appropriately between private and public partners, thereby boosting public-private partnership activity in the sector. Also, the government's

enhanced focus on monetisation via the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) has attracted foreign investors, including various sovereign wealth funds and pension funds, it added. Ind-Ra asserted that developers need to be mindful of aggressive bidding, taking projects beyond the appetite of their balance sheet, and overestimating toll revenue for greenfield projects to protect them from volatilities in the longer run. The road sector in India has been at the forefront of performance and innovation and has played a crucial role in shaping the country's economic growth trajectory, with a CAGR of about 14% over the past decade, it said.

Market cap of BSE-listed firms hits US\$ 5-trillion milestone

The combined market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies hit the US\$ 5-trillion milestone for the first time on Tuesday. At the close of trade, the total valuation of the exchange-listed companies stood at an all-time high of Rs 4,14,62,306.56 crore (US\$ 4.97 trillion), the BSE data showed. The 30-share Sensex declined 52.63 points, or 0.07 per cent, to settle at 73,953.31. However, during the day, it hit

a high of 74,189.19, rallying 183.25 points, or 0.24 per cent. "The market capitalisation of companies listed on the BSE has crossed a record US\$ 5 trillion for the first time -- hitting a fresh high on May 21. India became the fifth largest market-cap country after the US, China, Japan, and Hong Kong," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities. The combined market valuation of all listed companies on the BSE reached the US\$ 4-trillion milestone for the first time



over on November 29 last year. The m-cap of all listed companies on the BSE touched the US\$ 3-trillion mark on May 24, 2021.

The total valuation of exchange-listed companies went past the US\$ 1 trillion level on May 28, 2007. The journey from US\$ 1 trillion to US\$ 1.5 trillion was covered in 2,566 days, or just over seven years on June 6, 2014. The m-cap of listed companies reached US\$ 2 trillion on July 10, 2017 -- taking 1,130 days from the US\$ 1.5 trillion level. It took ten years for the exchange to reach from US\$ 1 trillion level to US\$ 2 trillion in market capitalisation. From

there, it took 1,255 days to go past the US\$ 2.5-trillion mark on December 16, 2020. So far this year, the BSE benchmark has climbed 1,713.05 points, or 2.37 per cent. It hit the all-time peak of 75,124.28 on April 9 this year. In Tuesday's trade, among the Sensex components, Nestle, Maruti, IndusInd Bank, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HDFC Bank, and Axis Bank were the major laggards.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
TENDER NOTICE
 NIT No. 02/GHMC/MP/EE/2024-25 Date: 21-05-2024
 Name of Work: Civil Works (2). Estimate Amount / ECV: Rs. 52.00 Lakhs, Start Date/ Last Date & Time for receipts of Bids: 22.05.2024 @ 11.00 AM / 28.05.2024 @ 11.15 AM. Name & Address Officer: Sri. P.Satyaj Narayana, Executive Engineer, GHMC, Moosapet Circle-23, Cell: 9899930362. For Further details can be seen at e-procurement @ www.tender.e-procurement.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer
 P.O.No: 1215-PP/CLAD/VI/10324-25 Dt: 21-05-2024 GHMC, Moosapet Division - 23

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Wednesday
May 22, 2024

'I'VE ENCOUNTERED A LOT OF REJECTIONS; IT'S BEEN FRUSTRATING'

Srishty Rode, who recently made her film debut with *Gabru Gang*, speaks candidly with *The Pioneer* about her career and recalls rejections.

SUBODHINI PUROHIT

Srishty Rode, who made her acting debut in 2010 with *Yeh Ishq Haaye* and swiftly rose to prominence with roles in hit dramas such as *Choti Bahu 2*, *Punar Vivah-Ek Nayi Umeed*, and *Ishqbaaz*, has progressed significantly as an actor over time. She claims she has learned to better understand her characters and add depth to her performances.

"One significant thing I've learnt is that an actor should be willing to experiment, learn, and explore new areas, as each assignment teaches you a lot. This helps you improve as an actor." Recently, as she was seen in *Gabru Gang*, she shared, "I didn't have time to prepare for Ginni because I was on *Big Boss*, and in a week, I signed with *Gabru Gang*. We flew to Amritsar and started shooting, and I had no idea what to do. My director and producer wanted me to be exactly who I am in real life and how people view me in the *Bigg Boss* house. They just wanted me to be like 'Srishty'."

The sports drama film, *Gabru Gang* is written and directed by Sameer Khan, which stars Srishty, Abhishek Duhan, Abhilash Kumar, Avtar Gill, and Mukesh Bhatt.

The film focuses on the sport of kite flying, and she emphasises, "Kite flying is more than just a traditional practice in Punjab. Although this film was set in Punjab, kite flying is a popular activity around the world. Many people mistook the film for a Punjabi film due to its heavy Punjabi flavour. However, it was a Hindi film filmed in Punjab. As a Punjabi, it was my first time staying in Punjab for so long, and I found it to be a valuable learning experience. The friendly people left an indelible effect on me."

She says she has not done anything particularly challenging yet, but she found *Shobha Somnath Ki* to be rather demanding. It was about a warrior princess who had to learn a variety of new skills, including horseback riding, sword fighting, and speaking in 'Shudh Hindi'.

According to her, "Talking in the show was itself a big task, and for a very long time, I spoke in a very similar language, which sounded nice, but a lot of hard work went into it as the role demanded a specific kind of walk and way of speaking."

Another episode, *Punar Vivah: Ek Nayi Umeed*, was challenging for her since it was so unlike who she is in real life. It was unusual for her to play such an emotional role!

She also had to mentally prepare for *Bigg Boss*. The most difficult moment for an actor is the audition process. As Srishty recalls, "I've encountered a lot of rejection, been frustrated, and considered leaving the industry because things didn't go my way. But then you have to push yourself. I've done it. One must believe in their abilities and be determined. That has helped me remain focused."

Manjari Chaturvedi cherishes her first lead role in the youth-based sitcom *Yeh Ishq Haaye*. I had always wanted to be a part of a show on Star One," she says, adding, "and I was fortunate to be given the opportunity. It was a very youth-oriented show, and my show was one of the last to air before the channel suspended operations." Manjari, she claims, was quite similar to her real-world persona: exuberant, full of life, and determined.

"Working on the show was really delightful, and I miss it a lot. I'd given everything to the character and the play. I recall working for 48 hours straight, remaining on set, feeling poorly, but still working with great excitement because it was my first show. There were no time limits on the shoot. I even ended up in the hospital but continued to do dubbing from there."

After playing many characters, including a joyful girl, a warrior princess, and a regular bahu, the *Pavitra Rishta* actor goes on to say, "I find portraying a dark character challenging, but I am confident that I will excel at it."

She also admits, "One mistake I made was taking a break after every project, which I should not have done. When you finish a project, more proposals come in right away, so it's better to accept them than to wait for something wonderful to come along and be picky."

Reintroducing cast iron cookery to the modern kitchen

RASHMI BHUMIREDDY

Following the pandemic, most people are returning to their traditional origins to reinstate science and old methods of life in a world of advanced modern technology. Ruchika Ruthi, the founder of Aarogyam, has restored cast iron cooking to the modern kitchen, drawing inspiration from an ancient lifestyle.

Though hailing from Rajasthan, Ruchika was brought up in Hyderabad. The cast iron business is not something new, because her father had run it back in 1991. "Apart from cast iron, we are also into the solar business," she shares as *The Pioneer* interacts with her. "I studied in Hyderabad for my engineering, i.e., electronics and communication. I never imagined that my family business would become my back-up and gain fame because of my products."

The fact that our ancestors lived their lives well and healthy without any technology has certainly been quite surprising. And undeniably, post-pandemic, people have been very concerned about their health, tracing their steps back to past habits. Well, and so, this was the inspiration behind the launch of Aarogyam, which mainly caters to cast iron cookery.

"I believe that cooking is more than just making food. It's a way to nurture our bodies, connect with loved ones, and live a more sustainable existence. In India alone we have more than 10 million cases of iron deficiency anemia every year and the prevalence of anemia in South Asia is the highest in the world. Women often feel tired because of reasons they aren't able to figure out - the leading cause of iron deficiency is most commonly found in pregnant women, ladies, kids and children. Our products are naturally non-stick, contain no dangerous chemicals, will endure for generations, and are engineered to uniformly disperse heat, guaranteeing that

your food is cooked to perfection," she added.

The pandemic has become a game changer for her by raising health consciousness among people. "People are ready to switch from aluminum or Teflon-coated cookware to cast iron cookware despite its weight and costly prices. They are well aware of the negative effects of cooking on aluminum-coated or Teflon-coated cookware. Also, I have witnessed the majority of families using cast iron cookware, which was passed down via generations."

Having not faced many challenges in her entrepreneurial journey except for the weight of her products, she shares that they also manufacture and sell industrial products, showcases, and grills made out of cast iron. Recently, she also added cast iron furniture, which is useful in farmhouses.

"WE Hub aided me in networking and making connections. It also allowed me to gain some exposure in share recruitment. My future goal is to make Aarogyam a household name and the synonym for cast iron cookery," she shares on a concluding note.

With the aim of embracing a sustainable lifestyle, we bring to you Aarogyam, which aims to enhance your cooking experience while promoting your well-being.

FROM BUMP TO BABY A GUIDE FOR SEAMLESS PREGNANCY AND CHILDCARE

Bringing a new life into the world is an exhilarating journey filled with anticipation and joy. However, it can also be a time of uncertainty and questions, especially for first-time parents. From the moment you discover you're expecting to the day your little one arrives and beyond, there's a wealth of information and products available to help make the transition smoother. Here's a comprehensive guide to the essentials for a seamless pregnancy and childcare journey.

Prenatal care and nutrition

The foundation of a healthy pregnancy begins with prenatal care and proper nutrition. Regular check-ups with an obstetrician or midwife are crucial for monitoring the baby's growth and ensuring the mother's well-being. Additionally, maintaining a balanced diet rich in essential nutrients like folic acid, iron, calcium, and omega-3 fatty acids supports the baby's development and helps prevent complications.

Comfort and support

As the body undergoes significant changes during pregnancy, it's essential to prioritise comfort and support. Maternity clothing, including stretchy pants, supportive bras, and comfortable footwear, can alleviate discomfort and accommodate a growing belly. Pregnancy pillows are also invaluable for providing support while sleeping or lounging.

Preparing the nursery

Creating a nurturing environment for your baby begins with designing a functional and cozy nursery. Essentials include a crib or bassinet, changing table, comfortable chair for feeding or bonding, and ample storage for diapers, clothes, and other baby essentials. Decorate the space with soothing colours and soft lighting to promote relaxation and sleep.

Baby gear

Investing in quality baby gear can simplify daily routines and enhance caregiving experiences. Must-haves include a stroller, car seat, baby carrier or sling for hands-free mobility, diaper bag stocked with essentials, and a safe sleep environment such as a crib or bassinet. Researching product reviews and safety guidelines ensures you select the best options for your needs.

Self-care for parents

Amidst the excitement of preparing for a new arrival, it's essential for parents to prioritise self-care. Taking time for relaxation, exercise, and activities that bring joy helps reduce stress and promote overall well-being. Support from friends, family, or support groups can also provide emotional encouragement and practical assistance during this transformative time.

Postpartum recovery and support

The postpartum period brings its own set of challenges and adjustments as parents adapt to caring for a newborn while recovering from childbirth. Adequate rest, nutritious meals, and gentle exercise support physical healing and emotional well-being. Additionally, seeking support from doctors, lactation consultants, and peer groups can address concerns and provide guidance on breastfeeding, newborn care, and managing postpartum emotions.

Bonding and attachment

Building a strong bond with your baby is essential for their emotional and cognitive development. Skin-to-skin contact, responsive caregiving, and engaging in activities like singing, reading, and playing together foster attachment and communication. Cherishing these precious moments strengthens the parent-child relationship and lays the foundation for a lifetime of love and connection.

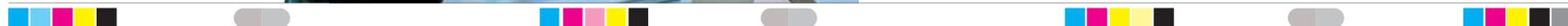
Parenting philosophy

Every parent approaches childcare with their unique values, beliefs, and parenting style. Whether you choose breastfeeding or formula feeding, co-sleeping or sleep training, cloth diapers or disposables, it's essential to trust your instincts and do what feels right for your family. Being flexible and open-minded allows you to adapt to your baby's needs and preferences while embracing the joys and challenges of parenthood.

Final thoughts

The journey from bump to baby is a transformative experience filled with excitement, challenges, and endless possibilities. By prioritising prenatal care, education, self-care, and support, parents can navigate this journey with confidence and grace. Remember to cherish each moment, celebrate milestones, and embrace the adventure of parenthood with an open heart and mind.

(The author, Dr. Shilpi Sachdev, is a Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynecology, at Apollo Cradle and Children's Hospital.)



what's brewing?

Vartik Tihara, Rishabh Sawhney, Manoj and Suved Lohia

In the heart of Hyderabad's pulsatingHITEC City, one8 Commune has launched its newest restaurant, embodying the city's dynamic spirit. This new establishment promises to redefine the culinary landscape of the region. one8Commune was founded by Indian legendary cricketer Virat Kohli. To set the vibe before its launch, one8 Commune hosted Manoj Manchu's birthday on Sunday, an event that saw the *crème de la crème* of the movie industry like Nani, Adivi Sesh, Akash Puri, and other Tollywood actors, producers, and directors in attendance.

Prarthana and Neha Shetti

Suved Lohia and Rikku

Ridhi Asrani

Gauri

Neetika

Stella

Vindya

Meenakshi Pamnani

Niharika Keerthi

Svettha Keerthi

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary

Deepshikha

Anamika

Tanya Choudhury

Deepthi

Tanisha

Sulagna

Santoshi

The European Wellness Biomedical Group (EWBG), in association with the International Association for Cell Therapy, Europe (IACT), the International Association for Stem Cell Transplantation, USA (IASCT), and the European Society for Preventive, Regenerative, and Anti-Aging Medicine (ESAAM), successfully concluded its 3-day seminar on Bio-Regenerative Precision Medicine in Hyderabad. The event was held at the Le Meridien hotel in Gachibowli. The groundbreaking seminar brought together esteemed professionals, researchers, and experts from around the world, all committed to advancing the field of bioregenerative medicine.

The stage will be set aglow at the esteemed hotel Taj Deccan in Hyderabad as the "Bharat Ke Anmol" award ceremony will be unfolded, marking a momentous occasion of gratitude and recognition towards individuals whose service to the nation is nothing short of extraordinary. Conceived as a beacon of appreciation, the "Bharat Ke Anmol" initiative, spearheaded by Dr. Mohammed Nizamuddin and a dedicated cohort of visionaries, seeks to pay homage to those whose unwavering commitment has shaped the destiny of our nation. In a glittering ceremony, that will be attended by luminaries and dignitaries from various walks of life, the spirit of patriotism and altruism will fill the air as the winners of the prestigious "Bharat Ke Anmol" Awards will be unveiled.

Freedom Healthy Cooking Oil introduces its new campaign 'Are You Buying Right?' as an extension of the campaign 'Dhyaan-Se-Lijiye' to spread awareness among consumers, to check the quantity of edible oil in the 1 Litre Pouch being purchased. The campaign is aimed at encouraging consumers to check the quantity of edible oil mentioned on the pack before purchasing, so that they are not deceived. The campaign urges people to 'Be Aware' and not be tricked into purchasing a pack of oil resembling a 1 Litre pouch with less oil.

FUN

ARCHIE

WHAT'S THAT, REG? ELECTRONIC BELLY SCRATCHER? CALIPERS! THEY'RE USED TO MEASURE BODY FAT!

GOOD IDEA! I SHOULD MEASURE MY FAT CONTENT! ALLOW ME!

HENRY SCARDELL! CRAIG BOGDMAN!

HMMM...

CALVIN AND HOBBS

HOW DOES THIS TRANSMORPHIVER GUN KNOW WHAT TO TRANSMORPHIFY SOMETHING INTO?

TELEPATHY.

THE GUN AUTOMATICALLY READS THE BRAIN WAVES YOU EMIT, AND TURNS THE OBJECT INTO WHATEVER YOU WANT.

THAT'S AMAZING.

WELL, IT TOOK ME ALL MORNING TO INVENT.

SO SAY I'M THINKING ABOUT A BIG SLAB OF GRILLED TUNA NOW... WATCH WHERE YOU'RE POINTING THAT! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE POINTING THAT!

GARFIELD

24 HOURS IN A DAY

OR, AS I LIKE TO THINK OF IT...

5 MEALS, 4 NAPS, 11 SNACKS AND A COUPLE OF TV SHOWS

REALITY CHECK

I'D LIKE TO SOLVE THE PUZZLE ALEX--ARE!

BAK

SPEED BUMP

MAYBE WE SHOULD PUT AWAY OUR PHONES--GHE'S TRYING TO TEXT ON A CRACKER.

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8				
9	10	11		
12			13	14
15				
16	17		18	
19				

NANCY

SON... OH-OH! IT LOOKS LIKE I'M SURROUNDED! WHAT'S UP, GUYS?!

VIETNAM VET

PHIL--BOY--IT'S HIGH TIME YOU AND FRITZI GET HITCHED!!

HUH?!! MARRY HER! THAT'S A DIRECT ORDER!

GINGER MEGGS

WHO ARE YOU EMAILING, FITZZY?

ANTONIO BUTTERES. I BET YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO THAT IS, DO YOU?

WELL, OF COURSE I KNOW WHO HE IS!

I JUST CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT POSITION HE PLAYS.

SUDOKU

		1	6	2	9			
	7					8		4
4	6		8	1				5
5		4		9		3		
7		3		6	5		2	4
								1
6	8							
		7	3	4	8			

Yesterday's solution

6	2	4	9	3	1	7	5	8
3	7	8	4	5	2	6	9	1
9	5	1	7	8	6	2	4	3
8	4	3	6	2	7	5	1	9
5	9	2	1	4	8	3	7	6
7	1	6	3	9	5	4	8	2
2	8	9	5	6	4	1	3	7
1	3	5	2	7	9	8	6	4
4	6	7	8	1	3	9	2	5

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS

- An extinct animal
- Not different
- Get away from
- Soaring fireworks
- Jump along on one foot
- Beneath
- Depart
- A tree that doesn't shed its leaves
- Footwear
- Foes
- Doing a job with something
- A house made of hard snow
- Split into smaller parts
- Restaurant's meal list
- Something that helps you find the answer to a puzzle
- Liquid inside a pen
- Obstinate

DOWN

- With your appearance changed so that people will not recognise you
- Labelled
- High playing cards

SOLUTION

S	R	E	S	T			
O	L	I	B	R	A	T	
S	A	N	R	E			
T	I	R	O	F	I	N	
I	A	S	T	A			
F	L	I	V	A	E		
N	T	E	R	F	L	O	R
N	E	O	V	S			
E	V	A	P	O	R	A	T
D	R	E	L	E	N		

KANNAPPA TEASER UNVEILED AT CANNES, TO RELEASE FOR AUDIENCE ON JUNE 13



Telugu actor Vishnu Manchu made waves at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival by unveiling the teaser of his much-anticipated film *Kannappa*. Amidst the glitz and glamour of the French Riviera, Manchu shared his excitement as he revealed that the teaser would be available to audiences worldwide on June 13. The announcement came following the teaser's positive reception from attendees, international distributors, and other industry insiders present at the event.

Taking to social media platform X (formerly Twitter), Manchu expressed his joy at the overwhelming response to the teaser. He also revealed plans for an exclusive screening of the teaser for a select audience later this month in Hyderabad, further building anticipation for the film's release.

He wrote on his X handle on Tuesday: "We showcased the teaser of *Kannappa* here in Cannes, and it received an overwhelmingly positive response! International distributors, local Indians, and everyone who saw it absolutely loved it. I am excited and have butterflies in my stomach after witnessing such fantastic reactions. For our audience in India, the teaser will be released worldwide on June 13. On May 30, I will be showcasing the Telugu version of the teaser in Hyderabad at a popu-

lar theater. This special screening is for a select audience who have been encouraging *Kannappa* throughout my journey and have been sending constant messages of support on Instagram and Twitter. My team will be reaching out to these special invitees. I can't wait to share the world of *Kannappa* with you all!"

Manchu's Cannes appearance was nothing short of spectacular, as he graced the red carpet alongside his wife, Viranica, and his father, veteran actor-producer M. Mohan Babu, as well as actor-choreographer Prabhu Deva. Their presence added to the allure of the festival, setting the stage for the grand unveiling of *Kannappa*.

Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh and penned by Vishnu Manchu himself, *Kannappa* boasts an impressive ensemble cast including Prabhas, Mohanlal, Akshay Kumar, and others. Produced by Paruchuri Gopala Krishna, Eswar Reddy, G. Nageswara Reddy, Tota Prasad, and M. Mohan Babu, the film promises to be a cinematic spectacle, with more details set to be revealed in the coming days.



Mohanlal looks powerful in L2 Empuraan

Celebrating his 64th birthday on Tuesday (May 21), Mohanlal received a special gift from actor-filmmaker Prithviraj Sukumaran: a new poster unveiling Mohanlal's appearance in *L2 Empuraan*. Directed by Prithviraj himself, this sequel to the 2019 hit *Lucifer* once again features Mohanlal in the lead role.

The buzz for *L2 Empuraan* started building in November 2023 with the release of the first poster, which showed Mohanlal from behind, holding a gun. Now, the latest poster showcases Mohanlal dressed in all-black attire, striding confidently among a group of armed security personnel. Sharing the poster on X (formerly Twitter), Prithviraj extended birthday wishes to Mohanlal, affectionately referred to as Laletta, while teasing fans with the hashtag #L2E.

The sequel to Prithviraj's directorial debut, *Lucifer*, was officially announced in August 2022, much to the excitement of fans who were enthralled by Mohanlal's portrayal of the charismatic Stephen Nedumpally. However, the release date of *L2 Empuraan* is still under wraps.

Set to be released in multiple languages, including Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi, *L2 Empuraan* is being produced by Lyca Productions. Earlier this year, Prithviraj announced the completion of the third schedule of his upcoming directorial, which began filming in October of the previous year.



Sudheer Babu's Harom Hara release pushed to June 14

Excitement is building as the release date for Sudheer Babu's highly anticipated film *Harom Hara*, draws near. With captivating songs, intriguing teasers, and other promotional material garnering significant attention, anticipation for the movie is at an all-time high. Particularly, the *Murugan* song, released on Sudheer Babu's birthday, showcasing his camaraderie with Sunil, has left a lasting impression on audiences.

Amidst the buzz, the makers have announced a new release date for the film, shifting it from its initial plan of May 31st to June 14th. The announcement was made through a brief teaser featuring Sudheer Babu wielding a gun, accompanied by the film's title song in the background. With no major releases scheduled for June 14th, *Harom Hara* is set to make its solo theatrical debut. Directed by Gnanasagar Dwaraka, known for his work in *Sehni*, *Harom Hara* promises to be an intense action thriller. Produced by Sumanth G. Naidu under the banner of SSC (Sree Subrahmanyeshwara Cinemas), the film features Malvika Sharma in the lead role, opposite Sudheer Babu. Set in 1989 against the backdrop of Kuppam in Chittoor district, the movie unfolds as a gripping period drama.

The film's musical score is composed by Chaitan Bharadwaj, while Aravind Vishwanathan handles cinematography and Raviteja Girijala takes charge of editing. With a talented team behind the scenes and an intriguing storyline, *Harom Hara* promises to deliver an adrenaline-pumping cinematic experience for audiences worldwide.



OC SET TO RELEASE IN THEATRES ON JUNE 7

Produced by Kaundinya Productions and directed by Vishnu Bompelli, Harish Bompelli is playing the lead role of Mani Saladi in the film *OC*, which tells the story of several young people who aspire to enter the world of cinema as youth entertainers. The makers have been completing post-production work swiftly. The makers officially announced on Tuesday that the film will be released worldwide on June 7.

The special teaser of *OC* released so far has captivated audiences. The dialogue delivery in the movie focuses on urging audiences to think about whether they, like the youngsters in the film, have been able to make their mark without any background or baggage.

With a high production value and a hefty budget, the makers have assured that *OC* will be a movie that doesn't compromise anywhere. It is said to have a storyline that will engage audiences from all walks of life. The movie unit believes that *OC* will captivate audiences in theatres.

Rakshana teaser: Paayal Rajput strikes as a cop

Known for her stunning on-screen presence and captivating social media influence, Paayal Rajput has made a name for herself by taking on riveting, intense, and impactful roles. Her choice of unique and diverse movie projects showcases her exceptional talent and continually captivates her audience.

With her astounding performances, Paayal Rajput has left many in awe. She is now set to thrill her fans once again with another powerful crime thriller, *Rakshana*. The movie's first look and teaser have already created a buzz among fans, and the recent teaser release has only amplified the excitement.

The teaser of *Rakshana* starts with a mysterious murder, followed by Paayal Rajput's character, a powerful police officer, determined to catch the culprit. The impactful background music and captivating cinematography heighten the intensity of the teaser, leaving the audience craving more.

Rakshana, inspired by real-life incidents, promises to be intriguing and impactful. The teaser has already piqued curiosity among movie lovers, eagerly anticipating its release on June 7. Her incredible talent and dedication to her craft make her an exceptional performer and a formidable presence in the film industry.

In addition to Paayal Rajput's stellar presence, the film features Roshan and Manas in pivotal roles, adding depth and intrigue to the story. Pranadeesh Thakore, who serves as both director and producer, brings a passion for the project, ensuring a high-quality production under the banner of Haripriya Creations. Mahati Sagar, the talented music director, enhances the film's emotional depth through his compositions, while cinematographer Anil Bhandari captures each frame's essence, enriching the visual storytelling.

With a stellar cast, a dedicated director-producer, a talented music director, and a skilled cinematographer, *Rakshana* promises to be a complete package of entertainment and quality. Audiences can look forward to a captivating and immersive experience that will keep them engrossed from beginning to end.



A R Rahman to tour in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur

Music composer AR Rahman will be returning to Singapore in August with his first concert performance in the country in 10 years.

The Oscar and Grammy-winning musician will perform at the National Stadium on August 31. Maestro Productions, the company behind the singer-songwriter-musician's upcoming concert titled 'A Rahman Rhapsody', shared the announcement on social media on Monday. "Singapore! It's been a decade! We look forward to performing again in our favourite city! Join us on the 31st of August at the National Stadium," the company posted. The 57-year-old musician last played here in 2014 at

Gardens by the Bay. Before coming to Singapore, Rahman will hold a concert on July 27 at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Rahman's Malaysia gig is organised by Star Planet, the country's premier entertainment company, a press release said. "The concert presents a unique opportunity for fans to immerse themselves in AR Rahman's timeless classics, including chart-topping hits from his acclaimed films. With a setlist that promises to evoke nostalgia and stir emotions, attendees can expect an unforgettable evening filled with musical brilliance and unparalleled entertainment," it added.

THAMAN TO TAKE PART IN BIGGEST TELUGU CONCERT EVER IN DALLAS

Thaman S, who is one of the biggest and most successful music directors in the South, is known for his eclectic and mass style of compositions. While he has composed songs in multi-genres, Thaman right now is enjoying the top-form, working for movies of top South Indian stars. This is billed to be the biggest Telugu concert ever in Dallas by the music maestro Thaman, presented by People Media Factory. The Spice Tour begins on June 1. The promo released recently by the team shows Thaman with the mass blast *Dum Masala* from Superstar Mahesh Babu's *Guntur Kaaram*.

Creative differences lead to Ranveer Singh exiting Rakshas?

In a move that has left fans surprised, the highly anticipated collaboration between director Prasanth Varma, actor Ranveer Singh, and Mythri Productions for the ambitious project *Rakshas* has hit a roadblock. Earlier in April, Mythri Productions officially announced their partnership with Varma and Singh for this mega-budget venture set against a mythological backdrop during the pre-independence era. Reports hinted at Singh portraying a grey character, adding to the intrigue surrounding the project.

However, recent developments indicate that the actor-director duo has decided to part ways on the venture due to creative differences. Despite Singh's visit to Hyderabad in April for a photo shoot to announce the film, plans for the official announcement have been shelved.

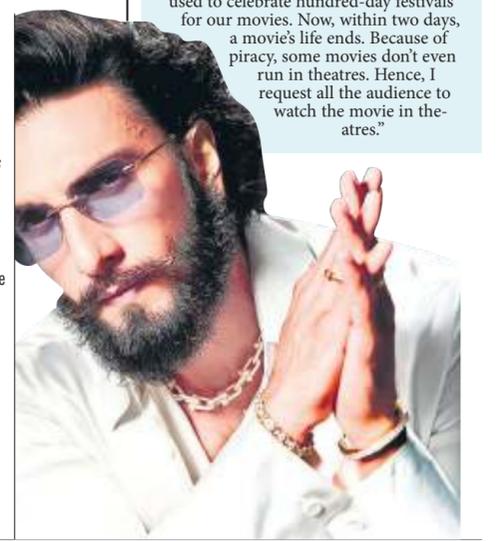
According to a source close to the development, speaking to Pinkvilla, "Ranveer Singh will no longer be a part of Prashanth Varma's *Rakshas*. They have amicably parted ways due to creative differences." Despite exploring various solutions, the duo has opted to move on, with a promise to collaborate in the future. The director is now set to restart the casting process, aiming to ensure the film hits the big screen before shifting focus to his next project, *Jai Hanuman*. As for Singh, sources close to the actor revealed that he is currently prioritising his personal life, gearing up for parenthood alongside wife Deepika Padukone, with their first child expected in September.

While the exit of Singh from *Rakshas* comes as a surprise, fans remain eager to see how the project evolves under Varma's direction and who will step into the lead role in this eagerly anticipated film.

'SAY YES TO THEATRES'

The movie *Dirty Fellow* will see actor Shanti Chandra, a soldier who served in the Indian Navy, play the protagonist, while Deepika Singh, Simriti Bhatija, and Nikkisha Rangwala are going to be seen as heroines in this film. Produced by G Shanthi Babu under the banner of Raj India Entertainments, the movie is directed by Adari Murthy Sai and is set to hit big screens on May 24.

As the film nears its release, the promotional activities kick off in full swing. Requesting the audience to watch the movie in theatres, director Aadari Murthy said, "Those who worked on the movie *Dirty Fellow* worked like a family. There was no need to instruct them. We used to celebrate hundred-day festivals for our movies. Now, within two days, a movie's life ends. Because of piracy, some movies don't even run in theatres. Hence, I request all the audience to watch the movie in theatres."





RR desperate to arrest slide against RCB

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Sanju Samson's Rajasthan Royals will face a stern test of character as they look to arrest a shocking slide in a do-or-die IPL Eliminator against an in-form Royal Challengers Bengaluru, here on Wednesday. The Royals, at one stage, had looked set for a top-place finish in the league stage before a string of four defeats and a washout in the last game against KKR resulted in Sanju Samson's side finishing third behind Sunrisers Hyderabad.

On the other hand, RCB have sensationally fought their way back from the brink of elimination. After losing seven of their first eight games this season, the team led by Faf du Plessis hit a dream run and finally knocked out defending champions Chennai Super Kings a few nights ago to seal a playoffs berth.

If Rajasthan Royals are coming off four losses and a rained-off game, RCB have notched up six consecutive wins to sound a warning to their rivals that they mean business in the playoffs. RR, the 2008 IPL winners, suddenly find themselves as the underdogs, when a couple of weeks ago they were red-hot favourites.

When on song, Rajasthan Royals have shown they are unbeatable, but the last four games have exposed frailties in their batting and bowling. The exit of Jos Buttler has taken a lot of firepower out of their batting and a lot will depend on Yashasvi Jaiswal



(348 runs), skipper Samson (504) and Riyan Parag (531) to halt the slide. Samson and Parag will once again be expected to deliver the goods for RR, with England's Tom Kohler-Cadmore expected to partner Jaiswal in what seems like a frail opening pair going by form and experience. Shimron Hetmyer is expected to be available for the contest giving Rajasthan solidity in the lower order, which has not made a big

contribution with the bat this season. RRs strong bowling lineup could come in handy given the venue for the Eliminator has not been a batting paradise like the other grounds, where shorter boundaries and docile tracks have made the bowlers' job tougher. The 200-run mark has been breached only twice in 12 innings this season at the Narendra Modi Stadium, which means the team having a disciplined

bowling attack and a strong batting lineup is more likely to win here. On the other hand, RCB's Virat Kohli continues to be the highest run-getter this season with 708 runs from 14 matches and could make the difference in the contest. After initial struggles, RCB skipper Faf du Plessis has also found form with the bat to forge a dominating partnership at the top with Kohli, while Rajat Patidar (five half-

centuries this season) has also given solidity at the top. RCB have not been impacted much by the exit of England's Will Jacks, while veteran Dinesh Karthik is firing on all cylinders with a strike rate in excess of 195 lower down the order. In their last match, left-arm seamer Yash Dayal turned around his fortunes to dish out a splendid final over against CSK to deny them a win and lead RCB into the playoffs. For a bowler who was devastated after conceding five consecutive sixes in an over last year, Dayal has proved his mettle this year.

TEAMS (FROM):

Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c&wk), Abid Mushtaq, Avesh Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Donovan Ferreira, Kuldeep Sen, Kunal Singh Rathore, Nandre Burger, Navdeep Saini, Ravichandran Ashwin, Riyan Parag, Sandeep Sharma, Shimron Hetmyer, Shubham Dubey, Rovman Powell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Trent Boult, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Yuzvendra Chahal, Tanush Kotian.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Faf du Plessis (c), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik (wk), Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh and Saurav Chauhan.



McGurk, Short offer something different: Australia coach on pairs inclusion as travelling reserves for World Cup

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian cricket team coach Andrew McDonald said on Tuesday that charismatic young batter Jake Fraser-McGurk and all-rounder Matthew Short have been added as travelling reserves with the squad for the T20 World Cup in the Americas because they bring something different to the table. Fraser-McGurk, 22, in only his debut IPL season, gave an excellent display of explosive batsmanship for Delhi Capitals smashing four half-centuries in nine games at an astronomical strike rate exceeding 234. He hit 330 runs, including 32 boundaries and 28 maximums, prompting several Australian greats to pitch for his inclusion in the 15-member squad. But after being overlooked for the World Cup in the West Indies and USA next month, he has been finally included as a travelling reserve.

"I think they're (Fraser-McGurk and Short) slightly different in what they offer. Fraser is an out-and-out opener and the way we've grown Matthew Short into the team is through the middle order and that spin (bowling) ability as well," McDonald told Sen Radio. McDonald indicated that Short could come in handy in the event of Glenn Maxwell getting injured. "We feel like he's (Short) a spinning all-rounder much like Glenn Maxwell if anything should move there, and obviously Jake Fraser-McGurk is an out-and-out top order player," added

McDonald. The two reserves will, however, not be able to play unless there is an injury in the squad. The Australian team is set to fly out for the World Cup on Wednesday. "Both exciting, I think they both add a lot. "Those guys sit outside of the 15, the only way they can come onto the selection table is if there was to be an injury, which would give us two options depending on what we lose or what may unfold in terms of injuries," McDonald added. The coach said that apart from the two players, Australia had several other options as well, should a player in the 15-member squad get injured or indisposed. "We've also got some other options in Spencer Johnson, Xavier Bartlett that are playing in the UK as well, so if we were to lose a bowler those guys are up and running in the UK... and they can come in, it's only a short flight into the West Indies from England. On opener David Warner's fitness concerns, McDonald said the 37-year-old was doing fine. "No, not at this stage. We believe he's fully fit, everything he says is he's fully fit, we know that he missed the last game for Delhi (Capitals in IPL), clearly that was a selection mechanism there with the way they want to play late in the tournament, I think he played the second last round... We have no fears he won't be fit and fully available." Australia play their opening group stage match against Oman in Barbados on June 6.

OTHER SPORTS

Ekta wins gold with season's best effort in club throw at World Para Athletic Championships

PTI ■ KOBE (JAPAN)

India's Ekta Bhan secured the gold medal with a season's best throw of 20.12m in the women's F51 club throw competition at the World Para Athletic Championships here. A day after Deepthi Jeevanji clinched the gold medal in the women's 400m T20 category race, Indian athletes continued their impressive run with Ekta producing the goods to finish in the top, while Kashish Lakra took the silver with an effort of 14.56m. Nadjet Boucherr of Algeria won the bronze with a score of 12.70m. Ekta, a Haryana Civil Services (HCS) officer, had won a bronze medal in the Asian Para



Games China. The 38-year-old, who took up sports after her selection in the Haryana government as HCS officer, also won gold medal in the club throw event at the 2018 Asian Para Games in Jakarta. She had also qualified

for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. Ekta wanted to pursue a career in medical stream but a tragic accident in 2003 cut short her dream. The accident happened near Kundli in Sonapat district when a truck overturned on her cab on the Delhi-Haryana border. While she suffered quadriplegic spinal cord injury and is wheelchair-bound ever since, six other students were killed in the accident. On Monday, Deepthi, Para Asian Games gold medalist, had smashed a world record time of 55.07 seconds in the women's 400m T20 category race en route to her gold medal. On Sunday, Nishad Kumar (T47 high jump) and 200m runner Preethi Pal (T35 200m race) won a silver and bronze respectively. India's tally has now swelled to five medals — 2 gold, 3 silver and 2 bronze.



Hockey Pro League: Indian men's, women's teams hope to make most of European leg

PTI ■ ANTWERP (BELGIUM)

Indian men's hockey team will hope to iron out the flaws ahead of the Paris Olympics, while the women's team under new skipper Salima Tete will look to overcome the disappointment of not qualifying for the Summer Games, when the gruelling European leg of the FIH Pro League commences here with matches against Argentina on Wednesday. The men's team under drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh is coming into the tournament following a 0-5 Test series whitewash at the hands of Australia and would look to make the most of the opportunity in Europe to get back to winning ways ahead of the Paris Games. "Undoubtedly, we are focused on the Olympics but we also need to give our best to finish as champions (in Pro League) and secure direct qualification for the 2026 Hockey World Cup as well," said Harmanpreet, whose team is currently placed third with 15 points from eight Pro League games. Netherlands are leading the charts with 26 points (12 matches), while Australia are on 20 points (8 matches). "To achieve both these targets (doing well ahead of Olympics and secure direct qualification for 2026 World Cup), we will strive to give our all on the pitch and win all our matches," the skipper added. Besides Argentina, the Indian men's team will also test their Olympic preparations against Belgium, Germany and Great Britain. The Indian women, currently placed sixth on the Pro League

table, have a chance to climb up the table when they take on world No.7 Argentina on Wednesday. The world No.6 side has earned eight points from an equal number of games in the Pro League home leg, registering victories against the United States and Australia. Newly-appointed captain Salima said the friendlies against South Africa in India earlier this month had helped her team prepare for the European leg of the Pro League. "We played practice matches against South Africa (in India) to prepare for these Hockey Pro League matches. The point difference between us and second-placed China is just seven points," said Tete in a Hockey India release. "We (will) aim to close this gap in the remaining matches against Argentina, Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain in a bid to finish as high as we can," she added. China are placed second on the table with 15 points from eight games, while leaders Netherlands are on 36 points with an all-win record in 12 games. Following the matches against Argentina, the women's team will play Belgium on May 23, while the men's side will take on the hosts a day later. The women's and men's teams will face Belgium again on May 25. India women and men will end their first half of the European tour with matches against Argentina on May 26, before moving on to the final leg in London where they play Germany on June 1 and 8 and take on hosts Great Britain on June 2 and 9.



Vennam fourth in rankings, takes India to second spot in qualifying round

PTI ■ YECHON (SOUTH KOREA)

Reigning Asian Games Champion Jyothi Surekha Vennam's fourth place finish lifted compound women's team to second spot in the qualifying rankings of the Archery World Cup Stage 2 that got underway here on Tuesday. Fresh from winning a hat-trick of gold medals at the season-opening Shanghai leg of the World Cup last month, Jyothi missed the top-three spot in the rankings by just three points, finishing behind South Korea's Oh Yoonhyun, who shot 707. Han Seungyeon took the pole position at 711, followed by Luxembourg's Mariya Shkolna one point adrift. At eighth and 15th places respectively, Parnet Kaur (704) and world champion Aditi Swami (702) were the next best Indians as overall as a team India grabbed the second seed behind South Korea. The Indian women's team will get a bye into the quarters

where they will face seventh seeded Italy. It was a forgettable outing for the compound men archers and Priyansh at 16th place in the leaderboard was the best among the Indians. Prathamesh Fuge and multiple World Cup gold medalist Abhishek Verma, who seemed to have past his prime, were the next best Indians finishing lowly at 20th and 24th places. It impacted the team ranking as they slipped to fourth place. Priyansh and Jyothi combined to get a fourth spot in the mixed team ranking as well. The qualifiers for the recurve archers will begin on Wednesday. Indian men's recurve team are coming back after upsetting South Korea for the first time in a World Cup final in the Shanghai leg in April. India topped the medal standings at the Stage 1 World Cup with five gold medals, two silver and one bronze, pushing South Korea to second spot (two gold, three silver and two bronze medals).

Treesa, Gayatri enter second round of Malaysia Masters; Indians falter in singles qualification

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Indian shuttlers Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand progressed to the second round of women's doubles competition after securing a straight-game win over Chinese Taipei's Huang Yu-Hsun and Liang Ting Yu at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 here on Tuesday. Commonwealth Games bronze medalists Treesa and Gayatri, seventh seeded, notched up a fine 21-14 21-10 win over Huang and Liang, ranked 104, in the round of 32. There were four Indians in men's singles qualification round but none could make the cut for the main draw. Sathish Kumar Karunakaran, who won his



maiden BWF Super 100 title at Odisha Masters last December, beat Malaysia's Cheam June Wei 21-15 21-19 before going

down 21-13 20-22 13-21 to Indonesia's Shesar Hiren Rhustavito. Ayush Shetty, a bronze medalist at the World Junior Championships, beat compatriot Kartikey Gulshan Kumar 21-7 21-14 but lost 21-23 21-16 17-21 to Thailand's Panitchaphon Teeraratrakul. Former World Junior Championships silver medalist S Sankar Subramanian suffered 12-21 17-21 to Rhustavito in the opening round of qualification. In women's singles qualifiers, Tanya Hemant went down 21-23 8-21 to Lin Sih Yun of Chinese Taipei. In women's doubles, Palak Arora and Unnati Hooda lost 10-21 5-21 to Chinese Taipei's Hsu Yin-Hui and Lin Jhij Yun to also bow out of the competition.

Paralympics champion Sumit defends F64 javelin world title, India jump to third

PTI ■ KOBE (JAPAN)

Reigning Paralympics Champion Sumit Antil on Tuesday defended his F64 javelin throw world title while Thangavelu Mariyappan and Ekta Bhan also grabbed gold medals in their respective events as India jumped to third place in the World Para Athletics Championships here. With five medals won on a productive fifth day, India's tally swelled to 10 (4 gold, 4 silver, 2 bronze) and the country is currently placed below China (15 gold, 13 silver, 13 bronze) and Brazil (14 gold, 6 silver, 5 bronze). Antil, who had won gold medals in the Tokyo Paralympics and 2023 World Para Athletics Championships, sent his spear to a distance of 69.50m to stand on top of the podium. His next four attempts read

64.04m, 65.58m, 69.03m and 68.08m. Sonipat's Antil wanted to pursue a career in wrestling, but in 2015, when he was 17, his motorbike was hit by a speeding truck while he was returning home from a tuition class. As a result, his left leg was amputated and he had to abandon his dream of becoming a wrestler. His father, employed in Indian Air Force, died when he was seven. Tokyo Paralympics silver winner Mariyappan also grabbed a gold in T63 high jump with a championship record of 1.88m. This was his first gold in a major event in eight years. The 28-year-old Mariyappan won gold in T42 high jump in the 2016 Rio Paralympics and a silver in the Tokyo edition in 2021 in T63. He also won a silver in the T63 class in the

Hangzhou Para Asian Games last year. The T63 classification is for athletes with single through knee or above knee limb deficiency competing with a prosthesis. Americans Ezra Frech and Sam Grewe won silver and bronze with jumps of 1.85m and 1.82m respectively. Hailing from Salem district in Tamil Nadu, Mariyappan was raised by his daily wage labourer mother who also sells vegetables after his father abandoned the family. At the age of five, Mariyappan suffered permanent disability in his right leg when he was run over by a drunk bus driver while walking to school. Before taking up sport, he would do the job of newspaper hawker and work at construction sites to help his mother run the family.